First in Fiction

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**BOSS WORK GLOVES**

Everybody's
NUMBER THREE SEPTEMBER, 1921 VOLUME XLV

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# The Author of "Sacrifice"

### By Himself

I'VE been so long in Los Angeles, where the interviews with these pretty moving-picture stars are made, that I'm almost tempted by the force of example to begin as follows: "I am nearly nineteen years old and was educated in a convent."

But the fact is, nowadays I feel nineteen years old only part of the time. And though it's some years since I emerged from Princeton, I begin to suspect that my education isn't quite completed. It began, of course, in those times that we don't recall except in patches.

I remember sitting in an opera-house, dressed in a very small Eton suit, listening to the Jewel Song in "Faust" and thinking that here was the proper sort of world, where conversation was music. At home we had an edition of "Don Quixote" bigger than a dictionary—"illustrations by Gustave Doré"—in which, naturally, I saw none of the satire and pathos, but much of the romance, the seemingly greater splendor of other times and the charm of distant lands. So far as the arts go, it appears to have been the music of Gounod, the richly fantastic drawing of Doré and the extraordinary imagination of Cervantes that gave me the first big thrills.

But when you ask me why I chose writing, I must say, as I presume most of us would, that apparently I had no choice. Before I was out of knickerbockers I was scribbling tales about remote countries and ages in what has been called "the grand bow-wow style." I hadn't yet realized that the ancient Egyptians, for instance, could hardly have behaved in the grand bow-wow manner, since, as somebody has pointed out, they must have been unaware that they were ancients. In my pages, however, they strutted and ranted magnificently.

"Ha, Shabak, an' didst thou dream to beard me, Pharaoh himself, e'en in the royal palace? Ho, guards!"

When I went to Lawrenceville I wrote for the school magazine, and presently edited it, and did the same at college. But there the magazine was the *Tiger*, given up to rude quips and japes. No, there was nothing highbrow about the *Tiger*, and we who ran it did our best to drag the rest of the undergraduate body down to our vulgar level. It wasn't till quite a while after leaving college that I managed to get this levity more or less under control. It still breaks out now and then, and to my consternation I find that I've perpetrated another funny story.

And indeed all the while I was on the New York *Evening Sun*, *Mr. Hyde* kept popping up; and once a week I wrote a fantastic tale satirizing the most dignified personages and impressive events, and illustrating these atrocities with still more outrageous cartoons.

At the end of three years I resigned from the *Evening Sun* to write short stories for *Collier's* and *Harper's Monthly*. Then, presently, having discovered that splendid romantic realist, Gustave Flaubert, I saw what the novel ought to be, at least in balance, in uniformity of color, in restrained magnificence and poetry of presentation. Soon afterward I began my first book, "Predestined," and since then, between traveling, I've done three others, of which "Sacrifice" is the most recent.

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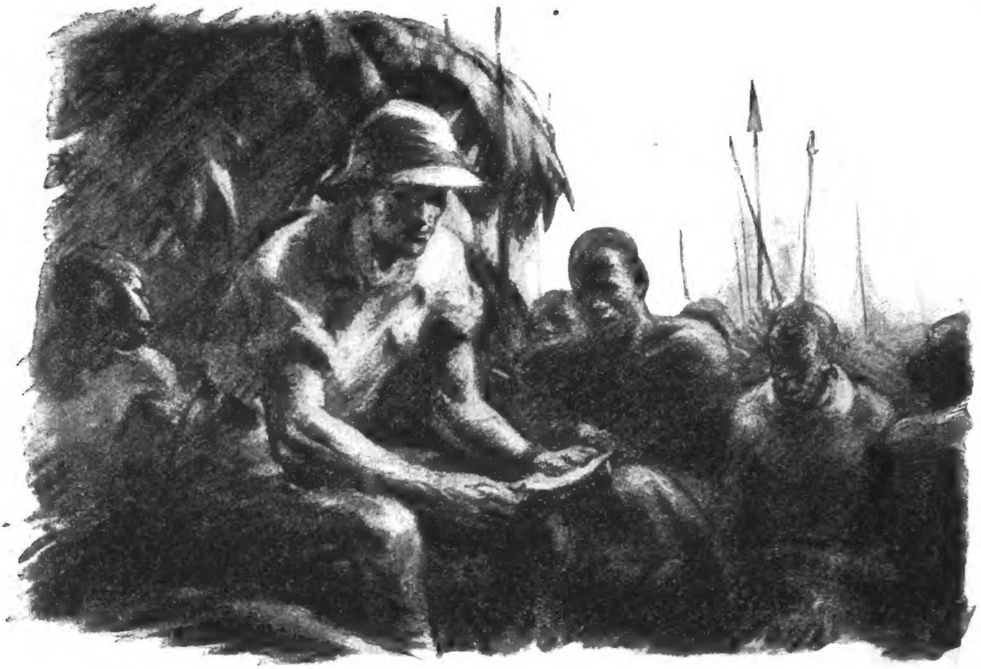
THIS picture of Honoré Willsie, who is known to all readers of Western stories, was taken in Wyoming last February on the edge of the Forest Reserve, in the Uinta Range, eight thousand feet elevation, temperature about zero. Mrs. Willsie explains it thus: "The lady in the picture was out on a hunting trip after mountain lions or what-not; but the horses objected to the depth of the snows. The lady tied her horse, as did her husband, and the two attempted to travel afoot. But travel seemed slow; and after the lady had frosted her hands they returned to the wise cow-ponies, without the mountain lion. But they killed the what-not on the way back to the ranch. Honest, they did!"

***There is a full-length novel by Mrs. Willsie in this issue, "Desert Justice" (page 99), and in October there will be a short story by her called "The Pinto Stallion."***



**At last it was yellow and crinkled, that magazine picture of the fair unknown which had become for him a living companion.**

*Love, Mysticism, Adventure—*

# SACRIFICE

Illustrations

*Beginning a Story of*
*as Gripping as any*

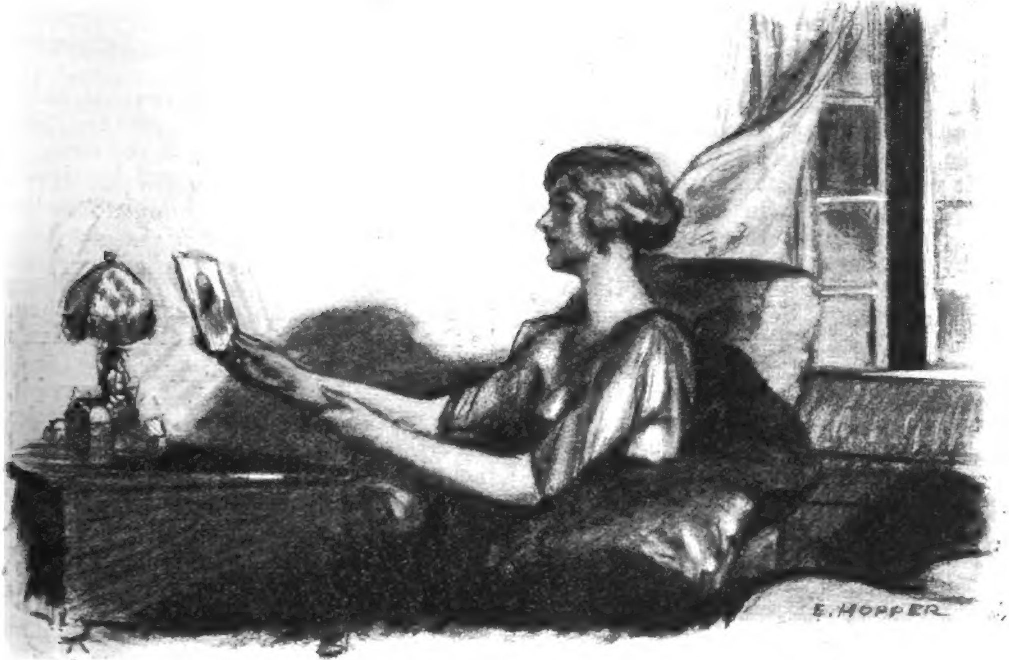
IN THE drawing-room of the Brassfields' country-house in Westchester County during a week-end party a lady was telling fortunes. Her name was Anna Petrovna Zanidov. She was one of those Russian aristocrats whom the revolution had scattered throughout the world. A thin, black-haired woman with a faintly Tatar cast of countenance, and she had a dead-white complexion that made her seem denser than ordinary flesh, and somewhat the look of an idol before whose blank yet sophisticated eyes had been performed extraordinary rites. To-night her strangeness was made doubly emphatic by a gown of oxidized silver-tissue painted over in dull colors with a barbaric design.

She was said to be clairvoyant. Rumor had it that she had foreseen her husband's murder by Lenin's Mongolians, and that since her arrival in America she had accurately predicted some sensational events, including a nearly fatal accident in the polo-field.

Madame Zanidov was gazing into the palm of a young woman. The circle around her were listening intently. The music of Schumann softly intruded into this stillness.

Then with her eyelids pressed together, the Russian began:

"You are sitting alone. You are writing letters, which will pass through many hands of different colors. One would think



**Lilla kept on her desk a magazine-picture of Lawrence Teck, the explorer, whom she had never seen.**

### *A Novel in Five Parts*

## By Stephen French Whitman

**by E. Hopper**

### *New York and Africa*
### *Stage or Screen Drama*

that those hands would grow warm from touching your letters. Now you are not writing any more letters. You are wearing a black dress." Madame Zanidov leaned forward as if striving with her closed eyes to pierce a sudden opacity. "This is very odd," she declared. "I can see no more pictures. For there is a darkness which grows larger and larger, which obscures everything. So now I must discover what this darkness means. Please be patient for a few moments."

Some one whispered, "It's getting quite uncanny."

As for the young woman, she felt herself turning cold. Her senses reached out in a panic to clench themselves upon the normality of her surroundings. But beneath that normality, that familiar solidity, her innate mysticism, her instinctive habit of foreboding, seemed to perceive a basis invisible yet similar—a solution, so to speak, from which material things and events were continually being evolved, the fluid containing all the elements of the crystallization. And this foreigner, with her idol-like face and meager, rigid body, her aspect of long acquaintance with the very essence of materiality, became the ageless oracle, the rewarder of humanity's incorrigible credulity. So, like the bejeweled princesses in the Mesopotamian temples, the Latin ladies who had crept trembling into the

Aventine caves, the Renaissance beauties who, in the huts of witches, had turned whiter than their ruffs, she remained motionless, her gaze fixed apprehensively on the clairvoyant. The latter said:

"It will soon be plainer; for the moon is rising. No, what a nuisance! It is still very dark, because the moonlight is shut out by great masses of foliage, great tangles of vines. Such a place! Gigantic thickets, through which wild beasts are prowling, and above them the trunks of huge trees. Wait, I have found a path. It leads to a clearing in the midst of this forest. Here I can see much better. There are human beings here and a feeling of sadness."

At a general stir, one of the ladies suggested nervously, "Perhaps you'd better——"

But Madame Zanidov was saying:

"The people in the clearing are black savages. They sit round a body that is stretched on the ground and covered with a cloth. Is it the savages who are so sad? I think not. I can not describe the one who lies in the midst of them. The cloth is drawn up to cover even his face. But I feel that it is some one who has loved you. He is dead. That is to say, he will be dead when the scene that I am describing is realized; but now he is alive——"

The young woman, raising her eyes, saw in the doorway, with Fanny Brassfield, a tall man, a stranger, whose countenance was aquiline and swarthy. It was Lawrence Teck, the explorer.

The young woman whose fortune the Russian had been telling was Lilla Delliver.

LILLA DELLIVER'S parents, killed in a railway accident, left their child a legacy other than the fortune that the New York newspapers mentioned in the obituaries.

The mother had been tall, blond, rather wildly handsome, with the look of one of those neurotic queens who suppress under a proud manner all sorts of subtle psychic disturbances. Painfully fastidious in her tastes, she had avoided every unnecessary contact with mediocrity.

After a busy social season she was liable to melancholia. She sat by the window in a charming negligée, paler than a camellia, hardly turning her head when, at twilight, her child was led in to kiss her. Recovering somehow, she traveled.

On those journeys every possible hardship was neutralized by wealth. She calmed herself by listening to the sermons of swamis in yellow robes, and by sitting in cathedrals with her eyes fixed upon the hypnotic splendor of the altar.

Wherever they traveled, her husband went about inquiring for new physicians—"specialists in neurasthenia." But then, he also usually felt the need of a physician's services.

He was taller than his wife, a brownish, meager, handsome man with dark circles round his eyes. A doctor had once told him that some persons never had more than a limited amount of nervous energy; so he was always trying to conserve his share, as if the prolongation of his idle life were very important. Yet he was not dull. Indeed, he could on occasion flash forth that intellectual brilliance which sometimes is found where least expected.

Disillusioned from travel, because they had viewed all those fair, exotic scenes through the blurred auras of their emotional infirmities, he and his wife returned to their home in New York. There they were protected against all contact with ugliness, all ignoble influences, all sources of unhappiness except themselves.

It was a stately old house—for two hundred years the Dellivers and the Balbians had been stately families—a house always rather dim, its shadows aglimmer with richness, and here and there a beam of light illuminating some flawless precious object. It was a house of silent servants, of drifting faces imprinted with a gracious weariness, of beautifully modulated low voices, of noble reticence. Yet all the while the place quivered from secret transports of anguish.

In this atmosphere Lilla, the child, was like a delicate instrument on which are recorded, to be ultimately reproduced, myriad vibrations too subtle to be appreciated by the five senses. Or, one might say, the small apparent form that this man and this woman had created in their likeness—as it were a fatal sublimation of their blended physical selves—became the fragile vessel into which, drop by drop, the essences of all their most unfortunate emotions were being distilled.

Sometimes, at a moment of perspicacity, the father's face was distorted by a spasm of remorse. Looking at his child, he was thinking, "By what right have we done this?"

For that matter, he was always oppressed by miseries foreign to normal men. Too complex for an irrevocable decision, too weak to stand firm against the pressure either of pantheism or an absolutely spiritual idea, he was an insignificant creature worried and torn between two vast antagonists.

He accepted the idea that there were persons who could fathom the destinies of others, that the palm of one's hand was cryptic with one's future fortunes, and that the remotest planets had an influence on one's life. Furtively, then, as one might enter a place dedicated to some shameful mystery, this erudite, handsome, wretched gentleman slipped into the sanctums of the diviners, where, with a feeling of degradation and imbecility, yet with a pounding heart, he listened to prophesies uttered by the aid of playing-cards, horoscopes, and crystal balls.

All he asked was some assurance that he would presently find peace. They all promised him that this desire of his would soon be realized.

Perhaps they would have called it realized by that crash of trains in the night, which he and his wife hardly heard before their fine, restless bodies were bereft of life.

So one day, when Lilla was six years old, the drawing-room suddenly blossomed with white roses. Next morning the orphan was taken away by Aunt Althea Balbian to another house, on lower Fifth Avenue.

Miss Balbian's house provided an appropriate setting for its pale, aristocratic, chastely fervent owner. But its sedate and antiquated brick exterior—unaltered since the presidency of Andrew Jackson—afforded hardly a hint of the conservative beauty that pervaded it.

Here the glitter of old chandeliers fell upon the suave outlines of Colonial furniture upholstered with sage-green and mulberry-colored fabrics, chimney-pieces of mellow marble carved into graceful flourishes and bearing on their shelves quaint bric-à-brac, family portraits in frames that it would have been sacrilege to furbish up—ladies dressed in the fashion of 1812, French and English gentlemen in antique uniforms' a few of these likenesses doubly precious because painted so naively.

And in this environment Lilla became a juvenile epicurean, precocious in esthetic judgment, intolerant of everything that was not exquisite. Her opinions amused and touched her aunt, who derived from that imitation a nearly maternal pride. In fine, the devoted woman was unwittingly preparing Lilla for an accentuation of the conflict that already had been prefigured in her parents.

The child was so fragile-looking, there was about her so strange an air of sensibility, that many persons who had known her father and mother shook their heads in pity. Some suggested that she ought to be reared in the country, to play hard all day "close to nature." But the play of other children exhausted her, as if she, too, possessed "only a limited amount of nervous energy." She had feverish spells from no apparent cause, and nervous headaches. When the weather was changing, or when a thunder-storm impended, the governess found it hard to manage her. Then, suddenly, certain odors and sounds filled her with indistinct visions of felicity. At night, when there was music in the house, she crept from her bed to the staircase, and sat listening with burning cheeks and icy hands.

Then, next day, there came over her an immense, hazy discontent with everything.

Now and then, indeed, a soft, invisible fog descended upon the world about her, blurring all objects without concealing them, muffling all sounds. At such times the child felt that she was living in surroundings less real than the scenes in her favorite books, where ladies wearing conical head-dresses and voluminous skirts leaned over balustrades to accept a flower from a gallant, in ringlets and tights, who had just finished a serenade. And her tragic little face—her eyes, skin, and fluffy hair, all harmonized in the most delicate shade of brown—resembled the face of some European *grande amoureuse* seen through the small end of an opera-glass.

In what far-off regions did one find this love recorded in so many books? Had Aunt Althea ever been the object of such adoration? When Lilla uttered that question, the pale, finely drawn face before her became still more pale, and she heard the cultivated voice that always seemed slightly reedy from a suppressed hysteria:

"One must learn to respect the privacy even of those to whom one is nearest, my dear."

Was this a confession? If so, that romance must have happened long ago. For Aunt Althea was old: there were even some gray hairs around her forehead; and at times when she sat in the lamplight, a neglected book on her knees, her eyes became weary, like the eyes of people who have lived a very long time.

"How different," thought Lilla, "my own life is going to be!"

Her ideal was romantically remote, involved in exotic scenes and strange adventures, familiar with peril, heroic, yet inexpressibly gentle when he turned toward her. She became infatuated with the pictures of handsome young soldiers who appeared to be at the same time strong and sensitive. In a book of memoirs she discovered a photogravure of Empress Eugénie's son, the Prince Imperial. But all of a sudden she learned that he had been stabbed to death by the Zulus. It was long before she could look without horror at savage weapons, the likenesses of aboriginal faces, or even the pleasant old negro who entered the basement door to tend the furnace.

"Yes," said Miss Balbian, to the charming, quiet ladies who sat in her library drinking tea from old china cups. "Lilla is a strange, I may say a startling, child." And, allowing herself one of her rare public failures of expression—a look of uneasiness—she added, half-swallowing her words, "I sometimes ask myself——"

NEARLY every spring, Aunt Althea, craving "her beloved Europe," took Lilla abroad.

Escorted by an elderly courier who had the appearance of a gentleman-in-waiting at the Vatican, they moved with royal deliberation, patronizing luxurious hotels, celebrated landscapes, notable art-collections. On these trips Lilla passed through seasons of melancholy languor, of feverish eagerness for movement—for progress to stranger scenes, as if beyond the horizon she might find a land where her nerves would be at peace, and where all irreconcilable impulses would become harmonious But no matter where they traveled Lilla did not find that land.

In the end she, too, determined to seal up her mind against one half of life. So she cultivated more passionately than ever her sense of beauty, her capacity for enjoying the most delicate pleasures, and at the same time—though she could not have known it—her susceptibility to hideousness and pain.

"I will be happy!"

And she became gay, elegant, charming, victorious over hearts.

At Biarritz, for a week, a Grandee of Spain followed her everywhere. In Athens she danced with a young man who was some day to be a king and who, standing beside her on a balcony overlooking the Acropolis, spoke rather sadly of his lot, "which restrained him from so much happiness." In Algeria the white-hooded sheiks stopped short at sight of her, their faces changed by a fiery solemnity.

For now she was lovelier than her mother had ever been—a tall, fragile, pale-brown creature whose carefully composed lips, whose deliberately slow grace, only half concealed that inner intensity of hers.

She had, indeed, the exceptional, agitating look—that softly fatal aspect—which is seen in those who are destined to extraordinary lives. It was as though strange, unprecipitated events were clinging round her slender body like an aura, the promises of unparalleled adventures in love, perhaps also in tragedy. Before her twentieth year she had given this presentiment to many men, who, with a thrill that may have been partly fear, longed to be the cause of those raptures and to accept the perils.

In an alley of Constantine, in fierce sunshine that oppressed and stimulated her delicate tissues, she stood before an old Arab who, seated on the ground, told her fortune by strewing sand on a board.

"You will be loved by men," he said, after contemplating apathetically the curlicues of sand. "And will be the death of men," he added, closing his eyes as if bored; for out there in the hills beyond Constantine love and death, as partners in the fates of fair women, were commonplace.

Before returning to America, Aunt Althea always managed a visit to Rome. They visited American ladies who had married into the Roman nobility. In those historic palaces the great rooms were cool, dim, and resonant; the women's voices died away in space between the tapestried walls and the ceilings frescoed with pagan deities. Through the tall doorway entered young men with medieval faces, in quest of a cup of tea. To Lilla these descendants of medieval despots seemed curiously dwarfed by their surroundings.

If they thought that she had come there to marry one of them, she quickly disabused their minds of that idea.

But her eyes were apt to turn wistful when she passed the shabby cafés where famous artists had sat brooding over the masterpieces that she admired. She envied the women whose lives were united to theirs in an atmosphere where beauty was always being recreated, who basked in that radiance of art which love, perhaps, had inspired.

Of all the arts it was music that cast over Lilla the strongest spell.

During the winter season in New York she haunted concert-halls where celebrated musicians played their works. One afternoon in the exit of a concert-hall Lilla met Brantome, a famous critic of music.

He was a robust-looking old fellow with white hair and the mustaches of a viking, displaying a leonine countenance out of which gazed a pair of eyes that seemed to have been made tragical by some profound chagrin.

At sight of Lilla he stopped short in the doorway; and, when he had peered at her closely, he rumbled in her ear:

"I see that this afternoon of bad music has not fooled you. You don't wear the look that I discovered on your face the other day when they had been playing Schumann."

"Oh, but Schumann!" And with a nervous laugh she said, "If I had been Clara Wieck——"

"You would have married him just as she did, eh? Ah, well, maybe there will be other Robert Schumanns. In fact, two years ago I found a certain young man— But now he is dying."

He lost the rather tender smile that had come to him involuntarily at this contact. With a fatalistic shrug he passed on, leaving with her that reiteration of the thought of beauty enmeshed by death. She wondered who this young man was, who might have been another Robert Schumann, but now was dying.

That night she dreamed that she was poor, and was searching the help-wanted columns of the newspapers. She perceived the words, "Immediate! Urgent! A housemaid with inspirational qualities!" She sprang up, found herself attired in her most alluring toque and tailored suit, rushed out of the house—which workmen were tearing down—and entered a street in a queer little old-world town, all gables, low thresholds, and droll door-knockers of brass. At the door inscribed "Opus 9" she knocked with a trembling hand, while a crew of children jumped round her bawling "Shame!" The door opened: it was the master, wearing a dressing-gown and carrying a candle. She could not quite make out his features; she did not know whether he was Beethoven, Schumann or Wagner. But with a sublime disregard of the children, as if for the first time in her life all her longings had become a harmony, she threw herself into the arms of genius, crying:

"I am yours!"

Of all the young men who tried to make her voice those words for them, the most persistent was Cornelius Rysbroek.

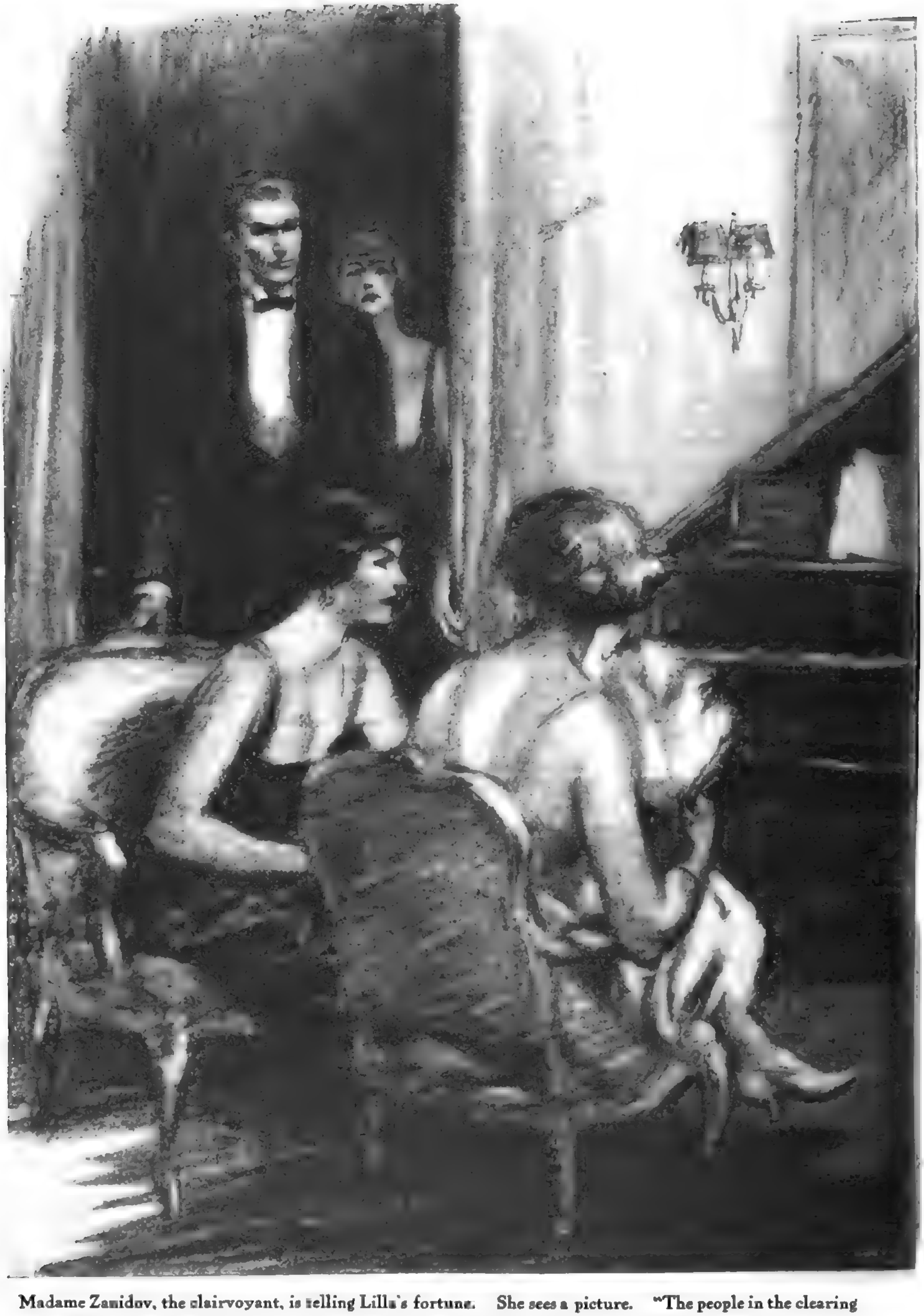
In their childhood he had drawn for her amusement Spanish galleons, the domes of Mogul palaces and a fantastic damsel that he called a bayadere languishing on a balcony. His thin, sallow little face bent close to the printed page, he had read "Ivanhoe" to her. At parties, it was she to whom he had brought the choicest favors.

Departing to school, he had addressed her in melancholy verses—doggerel decorated with references to flowers turned to dust, setting suns that would never rise again, countless symbols of hopeless passion and impending tragedy.

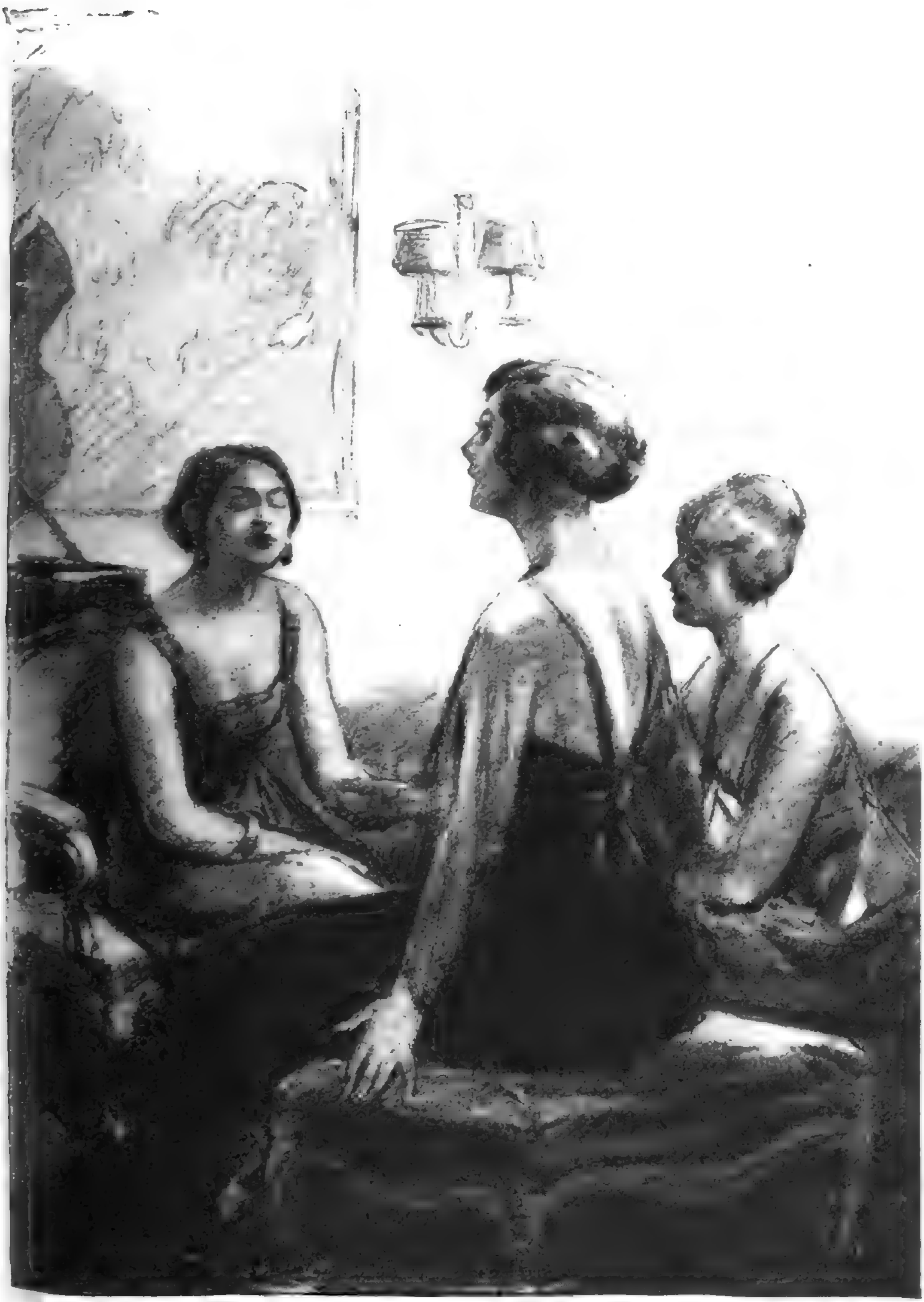
But as an anticlimax he always showed up alive in vacation time.

During his college years he had apparently forgotten her, had made himself conspicuous by some highly pessimistic theories, had tried the Byronic gesture. Then after commencement meeting her unexpectedly, he had turned a yellowish white.

Now Cornelius Rysbroek had become a lean, neat hypochondriac. Highly cultivated, with fine instincts and excruciating aversions, he was bored by his leisure yet



Madame Zanidov, the clairvoyant, is telling Lilla's fortune. She sees a picture. "The people in the clearing describe the one who lies in the midst of them. But I feel that it is some one who has loved you." Lilla,



are black savages. They sit around a body that is stretched on the ground and covered with a cloth. I can not raising her eyes, saw in the doorway a tall man, a stranger. It was Lawrence Teck, the explorer.

incapable of action and inconstant in every aspiration except this love of his. Whenever she refused him he sailed away, after threatening to plunge into some wild, dramatic waste, but always compromising on the easiest beaten path. He returned sadder and sallower than ever, having contracted in his imagination some new obscure ailment and with his old ailment, his longing for Lilla, still gnawing at his heart.

But Lilla, so fragile and moody, dreamed of physical strength and a triumphant will.

Where was he?

She was enervated by melancholy, scorched by impatience, then chilled by an indefinable foreboding, just as her father had been. Putting on a figured veil to blur her blush of shame, she slipped away to visit the soothsayers that fashionable women patronized. In a shadowy room hung with Oriental curtains, the shrewd female crystal-gazer informed her that all would soon be well. "A great love was in store for her."

She kept in her desk a magazine picture of Lawrence Teck, the explorer, whom she had never met, but whose likeness, singular amid innumerable presentments of the human face, had arrested her first glance and fascinated her mind.

His aquiline countenance, darkened and corrugated by fierce suns, expressed that virility which kept driving him back for his contentment into remote and dangerous places. But his salient features suggested also the patience and wisdom of those who have suffered many hardships and have derived extraordinary thoughts from solitude. His deep-set eyes, which she guessed to be gray, were quiet and loyal and filled with a reserve that might sometimes border on shyness. From this look she derived the idea that Lawrence Teck, like many strongly masculine men, might be timid with women, at least with a woman of unique attractiveness. On that account with a perversity that disregarded all her masterly imaginary heroes she admired him still more.

It pleased her to note that his was the brow of a scholar—he had written volumes about the jungle, was the most picturesque authority on the Islamic world since Burton, and his monographs on African diseases had added to his romantic reputation the luster of benevolence.

She was pleased to picture him as finding in his travels and work the stimulation that less serious, aimless men might seek in love.

When she read his books, there unrolled before her the esoteric corners of the desert, the strange charm and depravity of little-known Oriental cities, the deadly richness of equatorial forests peopled by human beasts whose claws were hammered steel, whose fangs were poisoned arrows and who carried in their thick skulls the condensed miasma of their hiding-places.

She seemed to see him passing through those physical dangers and corroding mental influences, a superior being of unalterable health and sanity, perhaps protected because of a grand destiny still unrevealed to him. She longed to participate in that destiny, or, at any rate, to be somehow responsible for it.

"Where are you? What are your thoughts?" she would whisper, staring at the likeness of this peculiarly congenial stranger.

Late at night, at that hour when bizarre fancies and actions may seem natural, she would ask him: "Don't you know that I exist? Then I must make you know it."

So she tried to cast forth into space a flood of feeling strong enough to reach him—a projection of her identity, her appearance and her infatuation. All her secret ardors that had never before been focused upon a definite personality now found their centering point in him, whose imagined nature seemed to be so emphatically what she needed to appease and complete her nature. She was like one of those antique sorceresses who would cast over distant hearts the spells that must inevitably recoil upon their makers.

But when she had remained for a long while motionless and tense she rose wearily with a low laugh of disillusionment and ridicule.

Even the strongest of such obsessions can not feed forever on imaginary scenes. Little by little her thoughts of him were obscured by other thoughts, by weakly apposite conjectures that had different men as their objects. And when different men made love to her, once or twice, maybe at a conjunction of exquisite scenery, music and impatience, of confused longings and passionate persuasion, she was tempted to consent. But just in time she stilled that tremulous smile and averted that dizzy look in whose depths lurked a fatal sweetness.

THEN, when life again seemed to her unbearably monotonous, she went to a week-end party at the Brassfields' house in the country. The Brassfields' country-house was copied from an historic French château. In the drawing-room, the high walls, from which well-known portraits stood forth, were paneled with amber-hued wood overlaid with elaborate gilt traceries; they ended in a wide golden frieze that curved inward to enclose a ceiling painted with roguish goddesses after the manner of Watteau. Here and there, between chairs and sofas whose arms seemed composed of half-melted ingots, appeared a baroque cabinet filled with small precious objects. Or from a creamy pedestal the marble features of some ancient sybarite regarded without surprise this modern richness based upon the past. There was music and dancing the first night. Emerging from the dining-room, the ladies crossed the large amber rug like moving images made of multicolored light.

"Where has Lilla vanished to?" Fanny Brassfield inquired of a young man in the doorway of the drawing-room, in her clear, grating voice that seemed made to express an involuntary disdain of everything that was not comprised in her luxurious little world. She had just seen one of her most recent lions, old Brantome, on his way toward the music-room amid a group of ladies; and this sight had recalled to her mind another celebrity, who, five minutes before, had arrived from the city after she had given up expecting him.

"Shall I hunt her up for you?"

"Never mind, my surprise can wait."

And Fanny Brassfield followed Brantome and his coterie into the music-room, her attractive, bony features revealing a rather quizzical expression. In the glitter of the big chandelier her coiffure appeared extraordinarily blond, her green eyes especially frosty; and the pale, eighteenth century ladies in the gilded frames seemed suddenly, despite their histories, insipid in comparison with this modern face, emancipated from a thousand traditional reactions.

As for Lilla, she was sitting in the dim library with Cornelius Rysbroek, who was harping on the old tune.

He declared that he was going away again. His health made it necessary. He had hung round New York long enough, enduring an impossible climate because of an idiotic hope. He uttered the word "Arizona." He spoke of hot deserts, solitudes under the stars, mirages less mocking than his aspiratons. As he contemplated her delicately fervent face, her tapering, graceful body wrapped like something very precious in pale gold, his eyes glittered with tears.

"Dear Cornie——"

And once more she began the familiar rigmarole. Her lips that seemed fashioned expressly to utter the incoherencies of love shaped the immemorial complaint, "Why isn't our friendship enough? Why must we always be clouding our old congeniality?" And so on. These inexorable words, combined with her look of pity and reproach—a look that seemed almost amorous on her fair face—gave him an impression of immense perfidiousness.

He turned bitter. He asked her where the unique suitor could be loitering—the strange knight for whom she used to watch as a little girl, the fairy-tale prince from another kingdom, who was to sweep her off her feet by the force of his perfections, and carry her away.

"I know this at least," said he. "You haven't found him yet!"

In his voice there was a gloating that made her again turn toward him that unique face of hers whose brownish pallor in harmony with her large eyes and fluffy hair appeared to reflect amid the shadows, like the countenance of Astarte in a shrine, the radiance disseminated from her dress. In his unhappy eyes she now perceived something that had never been there before, a desperation, as though his heart had suffered too long from a sense of inferiority to the unknown and unrevealed antagonist who was to win this treasure. For an instant, in fact, there was something weakly ferocious, not quite sane, in this visage that had been familiar to her since childhood. Then his habitual well-bred wooden look reappeared, as a door might shut on a glimpse of an inferno.

He muttered, in his throaty, queerly

didactic voice: "Well, one must be philosophical in this life. You'll teach me that, won't you, eh?"

With an exclamation intended for a laugh, looking unusually bored and vacuous, he walked out of the room like a man in an earthquake sedately strolling away between reeling and crumbling walls.

LILLA was approaching the music-room doorway round which some men were standing with the respectful looks of persons at the funeral of a stranger, when a laughing young woman intercepted her.

"Do come over here. Madame Zanidov is telling our fortunes."

Turning her sharp, dead-white profile to right and left, encountering everywhere a frivolous eagerness, Madame Zanidov protested,

"Really, I ask you if this is the proper atmosphere!"

She explained that she regarded very seriously "this gift" of hers, which had astonished people even in her childhood. She agreed that it was inexplicable, unless by the theory that the future, if it did not already exist, was at least somehow prefigured. Yet she believed that this prearrangement of events was not so rigid as to exclude a certain amount of free-will. In other words, one who had been forewarned of a special result if a special course was pursued might escape the result by pursuing another course. "For, as you know," she added, looking round her at the women who were losing their smiles, "the impression that I receive is often far from amusing. How can one tell beforehand? So I only consent to do this because, if what I see is unpleasant, my warning may possibly help one to evade it."

A lady objected that prophecy frequently had just the opposite effect. She referred to the attractive power of anticipation. Then she cited instances where persons had made every effort to realize even the most unfortunate predictions, as if hypnotized by their dread into a feeling that the tragic outcome was inevitable. Of course, on the other hand, she admitted, a happy prediction might have a tonic effect, heartening one to pluck victory from apparent failure. Or else just by setting in action the magnetic power of expectancy it might even draw mysteriously into one's life a wealth or a fame that had seemed unattainable, a love that had appeared to be impossible.

When she had voiced this last opinion, the other ladies' faces were softened by a gentle acquiescence. Their necklaces flashed with the rising of their bosoms; their heads leaned forward in thought; and the mingled odors of their perfumes were like exhalations from the innermost recesses of their hearts.

By this time, apparently, the proper atmosphere had been established: Madame Zanidov consented to display her powers.

All the women drew their chairs closer.

She took the hand of a young girl whose features were alive with an invincible gay selfishness. Madame Zanidov hardly glanced at the other's palm. Closing her almond-shaped eyes, contracting her brows, she let an unnatural fixed smile settle upon her lips. And now indeed it seemed to them that some of the mystery of Asia had informed her rigid person, or was escaping, together with a thick, sweet scent, from the folds of her metallic and barbarically painted gown.

"Do not be afraid," she said, without opening her eyes.

Even the girl whose hand she held had ceased to smile.

There was a long silence, pervaded by the faint harmonies of "Vienna Carnival."

"For you have nothing to fear," the Russian quietly announced at last. "All that you must pass through—how much confusion and twitter I am conscious of!—will hardly touch you. Few heartaches, few tears. Some day you will find yourself in a tawny land of harsh outlines: it is probably southern Spain. There you will meet a man as lithe as a panther, his shoulders covered with gold, driving his sword through the neck of a bull. You are speaking to him at night. He kisses your hands. But that, too, will soon end in laughter. You will marry three times, but never be a widow."

She opened her eyes, to gaze thoughtfully at Lilla.

They asked Madame Zanidov if she really saw those things. She replied that her perceptions were at times exactly like pictures. For example, she had seen the matador's lunge, as a splendid plasticity of violet silk and tinsel, and then the bright blood gushing from the neck of the bull.

In subdued voices they began to discuss "the possession of human beings by occult forces." One spoke of astounding passages set down through automatic writing. Another mentioned psychometry. "But psychometrists got impressions only from the past!" Whereupon they stared at the Russian. Their eyes, which had been lightly touched with a black pencil, were no longer sophisticated. Their rouged lips were relaxed by that superstitious awe which, even in cultivated societies, is ever waiting to invade the feminine mind.

Madame Zanidov was still looking at Lilla.

"Yes," some one proposed. "Try her."

"She doesn't wish it," Madame Zanidov remarked.

But after a moment of hesitation Lilla held out her hand.

It was then, when the Russian had described the vision of black savages surrounding a body covered with a black cloth—the body "of some one who had loved Lilla—" that Lawrence Teck, the explorer had appeared in the doorway.

IN THE music-room some negro musicians were playing a waltz; but Lilla and Lawrence Teck were walking on the terrace.

She said to herself, "This is a dream;" for she had come to believe that only in dreams did one realize, even in faint counterpart one's deepest desires. At an access of dizziness she stood still. The world—this new world drenched in an unprecedented quality of moonlight—gradually became distinct. She gave him, through that veil of silvery beams, a long look of verification.

As in his picture, he seemed at once rugged and fine, resolute and gentle. He was very quiet, like one who has willed to be so; but a certain shyness remained in him, and presently announced itself to her. Whereupon, remembering that she was beautiful and that her beauty had a way of troubling men, Lilla felt her own timidity transmuted into joy.

"Are your jungles better than this?" she asked in a low, full voice.

"The charm of my jungles often overlies a welter of stupid cruelty and deadly waste. Would it surprise you to know that I should like to see all the world as nobly ordered as this landscape?"

She did not grasp the meaning of the words, being too deeply occupied with seizing upon those syllables, those living tones, and dropping them one by one into the treasury of her heart.

Glancing down at the aquatic garden, he remarked, "These three basins would please my Mohammedan friends, who like to see their flowers inverted in still water, like a mirage come true."

"Yes, no doubt they have their ideals."

"And often dream of them in very pleasant places."

He described certain gardens of the East. He made her see nests of color unexpectedly blooming in the midst of deserts, behind walls of sun-dried mud overgrown with Persian roses, and with airy pavilions mirrored in pools that were seldom darkened by a cloud. Under date-palms the white-robed Arabs sat smoking. From time to time black slaves brought them coffee flavored with ambergris. After sundown, at the hour called *maghrib*, when the sky was turning green, having performed their ceremonial ablutions, they prayed.

"For what?"

"Behind the formal words? Who knows? For whatever they desired most. Probably for something that nobody would suspect."

"And the women?" she ventured, looking at him sidewise.

In those remote walled towns they still remained invisible. Their minds, restricted to puerilities, had never grown up. Their bodies were so lax that their short weekly promenade to the cemetery exhausted them. Seated on cushions, they spent their time listening to cuckoo-clocks and music-boxes, smelling perfumes, putting their jewelry away in caskets, then bedizening themselves all over again. Their servants, who had known in childhood the hurly-burly of caravansaries and slave markets, told them of a world where everybody was possessed by a thousand devils of ingenuity and wit. And those scented ladies with feeble flesh, hollow eyes and the brains of parrots, after listening for a while in vague regret, all at once became bored. Whereupon they fell to playing parcheesi and eating sweetmeats.

In those sheltered and languid lives Lilla seemed to perceive a similarity to her own life. Or, at least, she felt that her life, if he knew it in detail, would seem to him almost as trivial.

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"Poor souls," she said. "But one surely finds others out there," she persisted, unfurling her large fan of yellow plumes and looking at it intently. "White women, for example the women of the empire-builders? At such meetings, in those far-off places, romance must be almost inevitable. Each finds in the other an overwhelming congeniality? The loneliness round about exerts a tremendous persuasion?"

"Oh, yes," he assented, with a smile. "Especially if the lady smokes cheroots."

He told her of an Englishwoman whom he had met in the Masai veldt hunting for maneless lions—an amazon in breeches and boots, at the head of her own *safari*. Week after week she had led her dark-skinned retainers through the wilds, cheerily doctoring them in their sicknesses, herself never ailing or weary. At the charge of a lion she had withheld her fire till the last possible moment. By night, the *safari* encamped, she had sat before her tent in a folding-chair, one knee cocked over the other, a long thin cigar between her teeth, listening to the gossip of ragged wanderers who had been attracted by the firelight and the smell of burning fat.

"I find such women incomprehensible," Lilla declared, with a profound animosity to that huntress whose body was so strong, whose nerves were so sound, whose courage had been proved in the face of charging lions, who took life without a twinge and doubtless gloated over the blood that she had shed.

Lawrence Teck, after a moment's struggle with himself, blurted out,

"I assure you that when we far-off fellows dream of women it's of a different sort."

"Oh, of course. Of the one that you've left behind, I suppose."

Sometimes, he assented presently; in which case the one at home would be immensely enriched by that wide separation. But it often happened that such an exile, when no specially congenial woman had given him her heart, constructed from his imagination an ideal, a vision capable of brightening the wilderness with the most exquisite charms. Or else he might find an unattainable ideal ready made. Thus it was that uncouth sailors, on long voyages, treasured the photographs of unknown actresses in fancy costume, as a religious devotee might treasure an ikon. Or thus a soldier in some Congo fort, while gradually succumbing to the malefic spell of the encircling forests, yearned toward the portrait of a princess that he had clipped from an old illustrated magazine, toward a divinity whom he could never know, but whom he adored because her nature and life were so different from his.

"How romantic men are!" she exclaimed, turning away her head to hide her tremulous smile.

He seemed abashed, but returned, "And are women never tempted to renounce that famous practicality of theirs?"

She walked on along the terrace. The moonlight intensified her ethereal aspect; and nothing could have been more emphatic than the contrast between her seeming fragility and his apparent strength.

At a recollection she walked more and more slowly, her pace according with the faltering of her heart-beats. But it was in an almost indifferent tone that she inquired, "You are really going back to Africa day after to-morrow?"

"Yes, everything's settled."

She paused, staring across the gardens, watching the slow withdrawal from that scene of its peculiar charm.

"Why are you returning?"

He hesitated. Well, he had reason to believe, he said, that not far north of the Zambesi there was an unmapped ruined city similar to the stone city called Zimbabwe, which adventurers from Phœnicia were supposed to have built four thousand years ago, as a mining-town of the fabled "Land of Ophir." Who knew what ancient idols, what Himyarite inscriptions, what trinkets of gold, might not be found there?

"How can such a matter be important enough to make you risk your life amid deadly fevers and insects, venomous reptiles, wild beasts and wilder men?"

In that respect the expedition would be tame. The journey into the interior would consist of undramatic drudgeries and discomforts, of association with a primitive folk whom he had never failed to make his friends, of precautions that would confound the reptiles, the fevers and the disease-bearing insects. As for the wild beasts, they asked nothing better than to be left alone.

"Oh, yes," she assented, trailing her fan along the balustrade. "A hero must be modest on such points. Yet it seems to me an abnormal vanity that drives one into those places, just in order that one may say, 'It's I who have found a new pile of ruins, a few scraps of gold, in a jungle.' "

After a moment's reflection, he confessed.

"I gave you my secondary reason, because I thought that you might find it more interesting than my chief one."

It was true, he said, that he hoped to find a new Zimbabwe there; but his principal task would be to make a geological survey of some territory that was believed to be very rich in certain minerals. He was going for a group of capitalists who, if he brought back an encouraging report, would obtain large concessions for exploiting the land. It was a gamble: the territory in question was virtually unexplored. That region, moreover, was peopled by a tribe opposed to exploitation, and, for that matter, even to visits from their white-skinned nominal rulers. But he had always been successful in dealing with savages; so, since this was to be as much a diplomatic mission as geological survey, he had seemed the one for the task.

From this explanation she derived somehow the idea that he was not a rich man, that perhaps until recently he had never thought of money as important, but that now, for some reason, he had determined that his fortune must be increased.

THE waltz had ended; the dancers were appearing on the terrace. Some, descending the staircases between the pools, wandered away through the gardens. Here and there a match flared up against unnaturally tinted foliage. Farther on, a spangled dress shimmered beside a fountain, then, accompanied by a dark shadow, disappeared into a *charmille*. A clock in the valley struck eleven, its last vibrations mingling with a tender laugh that rose, through the moonbeams, from a marble kiosk enveloped in flowers. And as the breeze, heavy with the fragrance of many blossoms, caressed her face, Lilla felt that the gardens must be full of hidden persons each of whom had at last found the amorous complement.

At the end of the esplanade, in the light of the French windows, Cornelius Rysbroek's face appeared, then drifted away.

"What is that fellow's name?" asked Lawrence Teck. "Just now he wanted me to take him along to Africa. Poor chap! He doesn't look as if he could rough it. He seemed rather unhappy, especially when I had to tell him no. Indeed, he gave me a rather curious impression of misery and recklessness. What is it? An unsatisfactory love-affair?"

"So it's that," she vouchsafed, staring at him intently, "which starts men off to the wilds?"

"Sometimes it's that which brings them back from the wilds. I could give you an instance——"

They, too, were now descending the steps between the pools.

The leafy alleys, silvered by the moon, and redolent of flowers that had been made magical by the alchemy of night, surrounded them, shutting out what she had hitherto believed to be reality. They came to a spot where a circular wall of foliage, rising behind stone benches, hemmed in a fountain, above which a marble antique warrior was lifting in his arms a marble girl who struggled against that seizure with a convulsive energy, while her upturned face wore a look of happiness.

She turned aside, drawing a cloud of golden tulle around her slender shoulders, and seated herself upon one of the stone benches. "What is that story of yours?"

"Oh, that. It's only the story of a sentimental exile and the picture of his ideal."

The man, he said, had found the picture in a tattered magazine in the Afrika Hotel at Zanzibar. Of all the thousands of fair faces that he had seen depicted or in the flesh, it was this face whose peculiar beauty clutched suddenly at his pulse. But it was not so much the physical beauty that exerted the spell; nor was it, in this instance, the attractiveness of the incomprehensible. For the man divined from his contemplation of those features the nature of the woman, all her complexities, and even her emotional fragilities. There came to him the well-known conviction, "It's she that I've always been seeking." At dawn, smothering under his mosquito-net, with the din of Arab and Hindu, Masai and Swahili voices drifting in through his shutters, his first thought was of her.

He cut out the picture and kept it in his note-book.

At last it was yellow and crinkled, that picture of the fair unknown, which had become for him, in consequence of so many vivid reveries, like a living companion.

There were days when he forgot her. Then suddenly, under those desert constellations, he remembered her with a thrill. Or else, before the tent of some nomad sheik, all at once she fluttered from the note-book to the silken carpet, on which girls with little brown feet had just been making their cuirasses of gold coins leap to the music of flageolets and drums.

And sometimes, though he had never before been superstitious, he felt that this picture was a sort of amulet. For twice when he was in danger and there seemed to be small hope of his survival, there had come to him the fortifying thought, "Not yet, because I haven't found her in reality."

"Just a picture!" Lilla uttered in a failing voice, thinking of another picture that had been hardly less potent.

"Yes; but when he returned home, after a dozen efforts and discouragements, one day, merely by chance, he saw her alive, breathing. She whirled past in a limousine. She disappeared into the haze of a city street in summer. Whereupon he thought, 'I was not mistaken; it's inevitable.' He accepted the fatalism of his Arab friends, who believe that every man's destiny is fixed."

"He found her again?"

"Finally. There were difficulties."

"And they were happy ever after?"

He did not reply.

She looked over this magical garden toward the future, which now appeared like one of those deserts, but bereft of all enchantment and covered with leaden clouds that were not even positive enough to rain. Then, gazing at the marble warrior that had seized the marble nymph, she said:

"I suppose it was you?"

"Yes," he assented, and pressed her hand to his lips.

Through a swimming world she saw a metallic glitter that was slowly resolved into the dress of Madame Zanidov. She heard the Russian inquire, "No more waltzes?"

But when they had returned in silence to the house, Lilla went to her room.

She lay on her bed wide-eyed, as if floating in a tepid sea, buoyed up by happiness and wonder. Then she sat upright, stricken with terror. She had seen a clearing in a jungle, and black savages seated round a body covered over with a cloth. For a moment she thought that she had seen Madame Zanidov also, trailing her barbaric gown away through a shaft of moonlight.

"Love and death!"

From that moment the night which should have been full of ecstasy was full of dread.

IT WAS mid-afternoon when Lilla emerged from her room.

A servant informed her that "everybody" was motoring or playing golf. She entered the library, lustrous with its rows of books and its deep-toned paintings hung against wooden panels. Between half-drawn window-curtains passed rays of sunshine that came to rest upon clusters of flowers arranged in porcelain bowls; but the corners of the room were steeped in shadows. A man who had been sitting on a couch amid these shadows abruptly stood up. And she heard:

"You meant to avoid me?"

She sought the gloom beyond the fireplace in order that her changed face might not betray her. But even here her paleness was emphasized and her eyes, with faint purple streaks below them, took on a look of deeper anxiety. Her features began to quiver as if her soul were revealing itself beneath a transparent mask.

"Did that tell you nothing?" She managed to continue. "Because that picture seemed congenial to you in those lonely places you thought that the original must be the same? You were mistaken. Physically and temperamentally we belong to different worlds. You couldn't rest in mine, and I couldn't enter yours. If you knew me," she added, in a lower voice, "you would find me contemptible in all my weaknesses." She lowered her head, then, raising her eyes, which were full of fear, besought him, "Tear it out of your heart! Destroy it!"

"One moment. There, it's done. How easy it was to obey you!"

And they stood face to face in a pallor that was like a scintillation of white-hot metal, both knowing that their lips, though they uttered first a thousand similar phrases, would presently be united.

Then he came close, catching in his strong grasp her writhing hands. But she stopped him with a look like a flashing sword—a look as poignant as though they had been lovers for years and now must love no longer. And so, in fact, they had been, heart drawn to heart by a strange likeness of accidental or of fatal events, one longing groping through space toward another longing. Apart, just by aid of their imaginations they had progressed already from indefinite to precise emotions, from vague to fixed visions, each attaining in thought a consummation that mocked this present struggle. And this profound mutual intimacy, an accomplished fact in the realm of mind, was suddenly projected into the physical atmosphere, so that the glances of these two, who had just now met each other, clashed in an almost terrible intimacy, as though the question were not "Never," but "Never again."

Wrenching her hands away, she made a depairing gesture.

"Tear it out," she repeated in dull tones. "It's only by doing so that you can please me."

"Will you help me to kill it? Will you lend a hand by making your beauty hideous, your nature repulsive? Come and take a drive with me. Just an hour or two. How long do you need to destroy this love of mine?"

"Ah!" she breathed, closing her eyes in an excess of pain. It seemed to her that he had handed her a weapon—irony; but she knew that she could not use it.

In a broad-brimmed hat that matched her muslin gown she went down the steps to his car. The high gray walls of the house disappeared behind a rush of trees; the conical turret-roofs of slate sank quickly away.

From the terrace Cornelius Rysbroek stared at the distant gateway through which they had vanished.

The car rushed through the countryside. The orderly fields stretched away toward gentle slopes on which cows were grazing. Here and there a village abruptly spread out its roofs, which rotated on the axis of a spire. All the windows gave back the light of late afternoon; and far off, against a hollow between two hills, like wine in a cup, there was a ruddy flash of water. It was the Sound, and beyond the Sound lay the sea.

A cloud covered the setting sun.

"So you pretend to begrudge me this perfected feeling, this verification, that I'll carry back with me!"

He told her that over there he would build a perfect simulacrum of her out of his thoughts, as an enchanter might form at will in the twinkling of an eye the likeness of some one who was far away. "You shall even move and speak," he predicted, "and I will make your glances and your words whatever I want them to be. Look out for yourself! That is sorcery. I shall have taken a part of you away from yourself, across the ocean, to Africa, where the forests are full of magicians. Over here you'll no longer be complete. You'll turn your eyes southeast with a sense of missing something from your heart. And there's only one way for you ever to recover that missing something."

He gazed ahead at the road that the car was devouring with an endless purr of triumph. He pursued his fancy, while the car pursued the glimmer of the Sound, which was escaping amid the first thin veils of the twilight.

He promised that she, to whom everything uncouth and primitive was repugnant, would smile beside him in those equatorial tangles, or, at any rate, that she would do so in his dreams of her. In the camp surrounded by a hedge of thorns, in the firelight flickering on the shoulder-blades and teeth of the negroes, the wraith of her living self would sit at his side, radiant in the dress that she had worn last night. "Real as you'll seem to me," he said, "I shan't have to worry about the striped mosquitoes stinging you on the shoulders; and when we others go plodding along, no helmet or *terai* need hide that hair of yours. Since you'll be made of my thoughts, you'll be invulnerable. You'll catch up your little train to run across a field of ferns in pursuit of some small inquisitive wild beast. When the tribes make dances for us, they won't know that a beautiful white lady, in a golden décolleté gown, is seated before them, as happy as if that hullabaloo were a ballet by Stravinsky."

In the twilight, by a road hemmed in with sumac, they came to a small rustic restaurant which perched on a cliff above the waters of the Sound. An old waiter led them between empty tables to a veranda overlooking the waves. He seated them by the railing, along which trailed a honeysuckle vine.

They had come for tea or for dinner?

"Dinner!" exclaimed Lawrence. "Here, take this, and carry your sane and practical face away. Wait, you might bring us some tea." He reached across the table to feel her hand, which was as cold as ice. "I've frozen you!"

"No," she returned, almost inaudibly.

The odor of the honeysuckle was mingled with the smell of the sea. The old waiter came and departed like a shade. They were alone on the veranda, above the waves over which the rising moon had just thrown a silver net.

But it was a beam of light from the doorway that illuminated the angles of his face, at which, though it was not in any way handsome, she looked with a sensation of faintness. She bent her neck; her hat-brim concealed her eyes.

By this time to-morrow!

"Lilla——"

She became weak all over.

"Let me hear your voice," he pleaded. "At least I'll fill my mind with those tones; and when I'm alone I can put them together into the words, 'I love you.' "

As if conjured up by this utterance, a breeze swept over them, full of the fragrance of the honeysuckle and the acridity of the sea, like the immense soft breath with which nature blows upon the kindled human heart, fanning it into a sudden conflagration. And the rustling of the vines, together with the murmur of the water, expanded into a sigh which seemed to issue from the multitude of lovers who somewhere—everywhere—at that moment were swaying toward the irresistible embrace; and from the innumerable flowers of the earth, in the act of relinquishing the sweetness beloved by bees; and, indeed, from that whole spread of mortal consciousness which nature, moved by a supreme necessity, or fear, has subjected to this world-wide tyranny.

She lifted her head as if striving to rise above that smothering flood, and in the moonlight her face was revealed to him—her humid eyes vertiginous, her parted lips twisted into an unprecedented shape, her whole aspect, in its startling maturity, like that of the immemorial goddess—Aphrodite, Astarte, Ishtar, Alilat, Venus—whose genius and nature had suddenly possessed this flesh and blood.

Rising, she turned away in a movement of denial that came too late. He followed her to the end of the veranda; and there at last—or, as it seemed to them, again—he took her in his arms. For an instant her averted face imitated the marble nymph's face, her slender and flexible body the nymph's struggling body, before she became limp at his kiss.

In the doorway of the dining-room she paused to look back at the veranda. She wanted to remember every arabesque that the vines were tracing in silhouette against the moonlit sea; but she could not see anything distinctly. As she left the restaurant, some one presented her with a little bunch of flowers.

It was her wedding-bouquet.

They were married in a village rectory. The minister, peering over his horn-rimmed spectacles, stood before a mantelpiece on which a black marble clock was flanked by clusters of wax fruit under glass.

Lilla borrowed a cloak from the minister's wife, and Lawrence drove straight to New York.

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SHE appeared in the doorway of the living-room wearing a white burnoose, her pale brown hair caught up in a loose knot, her feet thrust into yellow Moorish slippers much too large for her. In the thin morning sunlight Lawrence, dressed for his journey, was strapping a leather trunk. Lilla sat down and fixed her eyes on the clock.

On the center-table, in a large African gourd that had been polished till it looked like porcelain, stood the little bouquet that some one had presented to her at the restaurant.

These flowers, because neither he nor she had thought to give them water, were already faded.

"Have you telephoned to the Brassfields?"

"Yes," she said with a wan smile, "and caused quite a sensation."

A small, wiry, middle-aged man, with an honest, lantern-jawed face, entered the living-room bearing a breakfast-tray. After one glance, keeping his eyes cast down, he bowed respectfully.

He was Parr, Lawrence Teck's valet in America and second-in-command in Africa.

With her head bent forward, she stared at some petals that had fallen from the gourd. Her neck rose from the white burnoose in a curve of the palest amber; her delicate lips were parted; her loosened tresses were filled with the feeble sunshine. She seemed to symbolize quiet. But when the telephone bell rang she started violently.

It was a call from Long Island, where Aunt Althea Balbian was summering; the servants had learned of Lilla's whereabouts from the Brassfields. Aunt Althea had fallen seriously ill in the night.

Parr showed his downcast eyelids and lantern jaws in the doorway. "A maid is here from madam's house down-town with a steamer trunk and three suitcases."

"Tell her to take them back," Lilla said in a muffled voice. She had planned to go as far as London with Lawrence.

She went to a bookcase, knelt down and scanned the titles of the books.

"I shall read these," she murmured. "I shall take them home with me, stack by stack, and read them all. At night I'll read the ones that are worn from your hands, the dog-eared ones full of pencil-marks. Show me the ones that you care for most. Have you any little book that's gone with you everywhere, that's shabby from your constant use? I want to keep it in my hand-bag in the daytime and under my pillow at night."

He turned away to the window. She sat on her heels before the bookcase, the white folds of the burnoose flowing out round her, her fragile hands in her lap, her soft palms upturned, her fluffy hair trailing down to frame her sad and tired face.

"Don't forget to leave me the key. There will always be flowers here; but the moment they fade fresh ones will take their place. What chair do you like to sit in? On winter nights I'll come here, and draw your favorite chair toward the fire, and sit opposite. I won't let these cruel weapons, these hideous painted faces, frighten me. I'll tell myself that nothing can prevent us from being together again. Yes," she declared, in a deadened voice, "my thoughts are going to form armor round you. Just wait! When you're alone out there, and everything's silent, you'll wonder what it is that makes the air round you electric. It will be my thoughts of you."

The clock struck the hour. She rose; but at the doorway she paused, drooping and tremulous, so that he could take her in his arms again. Her head sank back; her curling lashes veiled her dolorous eyes, and a sob, swelling her throat, escaped through her quivering lips. Her knees bent, and with a look of anguish she cried distractedly:

"Good-by! Good-by!"

She believed that her heart had stopped beating.

She was in the bedroom, lying on the couch spread over with a leopard-skin. He was sitting beside her. His face expressed alarm; for she shivered convulsively, turning her head from side to side, and biting her lips. He urged her to have courage.

"Courage! When I shall never see you again?"

"What an idea!"

She touched his dark cheek with her fingers on which the nails were like gems of carnelian. Her eyes, extraordinarily enlarged and swimming in a mournful tenderness, regarded his face as if striving to impress it forever upon her mind.

"Give it up," she pleaded once more. "Don't scorn my intuition."

"It's necessary," he said. "More so now than ever."

"Money! money! As if there were no other way! And even if there weren't——"

Parr knocked on the door.

"Shall I call the taxi, sir?"

"Yes."

Lying motionless, staring at the ceiling, she faltered: "All right. I'll dress."

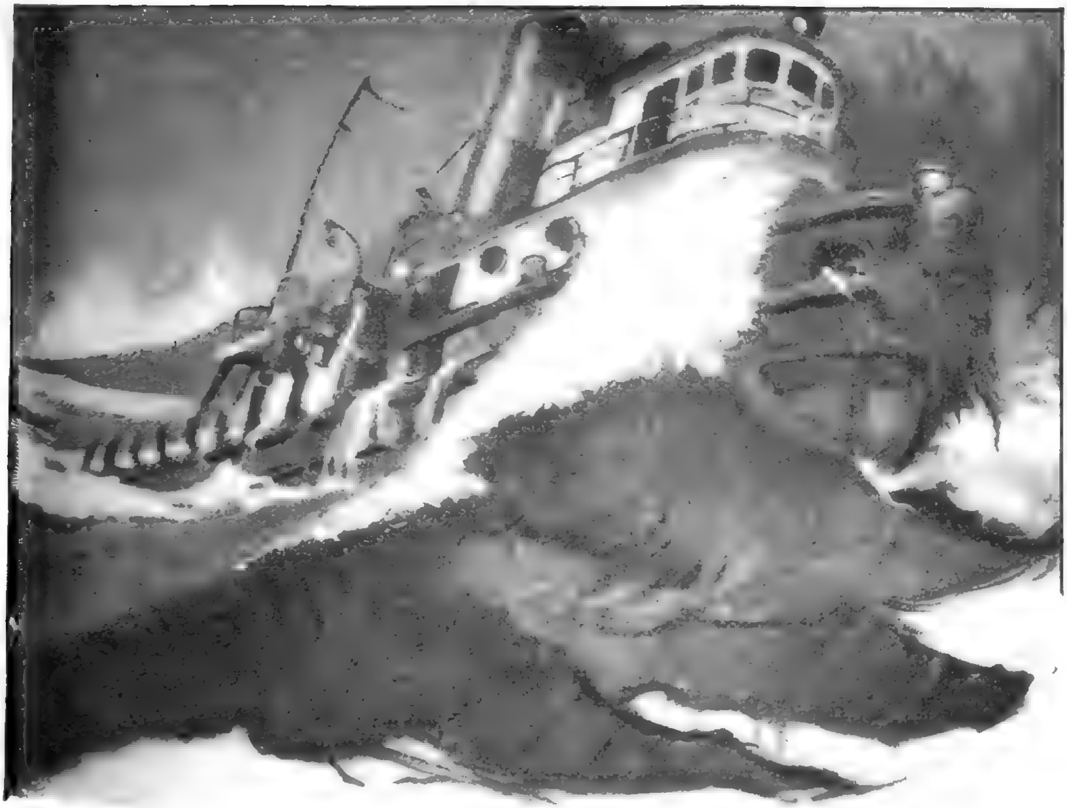
But she could hardly drag herself to her feet. As she pinned on her hat, she longed for a veil, such a heavily figured veil as she had put on when setting out to the fortune-tellers, who had said, "A great love is in store for you." "How dreadfully I look! This is the picture of me that he must take away with him." She entered the living-room as Parr and the taxidriver were carrying out the valises. She took a flower from the gourd. A petal fell off; and the taxi-driver, brushing past, ground it into the rug.

In the outer corridor, which she did not remember having passed through last night, she held out her hand. Lawrence gave her the key; she slipped it down the neck of her muslin frock and it struck a chill through her bosom.

When the ship had carried him away, she returned up-town and took a train for Long Island.

**Was Madame Zanidov's vision of death realized? "Sacrifice" will be continued in the October Number, out September 15th.**

From the bridge Ruth Lane surveyed the wreck. "Father must have had a worse time of it than we did, Jim," she said.



# The Might-Have-Been

*Are There Some Things We Can not Conquer? Watch Youth and Stubborn Old Age in a Glorious Fight at Sea*

## By Carl Clausen

Illustrations by E. J. Dinsmore

WHEN it became manifest that he was being jilted, Jim Blake was conscious of something like relief. Not that he actually enjoyed the situation; but it had its compensations. The ultimate was postponed. On an income of thirty-five hundred a year—Jim's income—one can live in comfort, two in less comfort, and Jim loved comfort.

Ruth Lane's refusal to marry him had an air of refreshing finality—anything Ruth did or said was always refreshing. That was what had attracted him to her at first. So it was not without a certain amount of curiosity that he asked:

"Why won't you marry me, Ruth?"

The girl leaned back against the trunk of the giant redwood and regarded Jim through half-closed lids.

"Because I don't love you, Jim," she said frankly—but with a shade less of finality.

Jim was conscious of a slight jar. He looked at his feet, then at his hands, then back again at his feet. When he finally brought his eyes to rest upon the girl's face, he noted with a frown that *her* eyes were closed.

"I suppose you expect me to believe that?" he said, with more sang-froid than he felt.

The girl opened her eyes lazily and gave him a look that might have meant anything short of homicide.

"I never tell lies—except in a worthy cause," she replied oracularly.

Jim picked up a stone and shied it at an inquisitive ground-squirrel which for two minutes steady had been regarding them dispassionately from a fallen log near by. As he could think of no fitting retort to Ruth's observation, he stretched himself flat upon his back among the ferns, stared at the sky and said nothing.

The girl glanced at him sharply at his continued silence. Then she arose and stood looking down at him. There was an odd, half-veiled expression in her dark eyes.

Jim turned his head and smiled up at her with exasperating amiability for a man who had just been jilted. Ruth's chin went up—almost imperceptibly.

"You're laughing!" she said. Her tone was accusatory.

"Who? Me?" said Jim. "I was *not*. I was just wondering if you considered this a worthy cause."

The girl's chin went higher.

"Can't you even be serious at such a moment as this?" she asked.

Jim raised himself upon his elbow.

"Why should I take it seriously?" he demanded. "Every girl that's worth having has jilted a future husband at some time or another. The serious part of a proposal is the acceptance."

The girl shot him a quick, suspicious glance. But she saw upon his face no trace of levity, and the compliment was too subtly sincere to be angry with him.

"Then you expected me to—refuse you?" she asked.

"Certainly, yes," Jim replied frankly. "I don't see what a girl like you could see in me to marry me. I'm a pretty poor stick."

"Don't be absurd, Jim," the girl said impatiently. "If you really thought you were a 'poor stick,' why did you ask me to marry you?"

"Because I love you," he said simply. "That used to be enough of an excuse in my mother's time. Dad was a pretty worthless sort of chap when it came to earning money. Still mother worried along for twenty years with him."

"I hope you are not insinuating that money has anything to do with my refusal to marry you?" Ruth asked icily.

"No," Jim replied, "I don't think it has. You're too decently romantic to refuse a man you loved merely because he was poor." He sighed. "I wonder if there is anything that would make you love me? I know I'm an ass at the lyre," he added with a certain tenseness.

The girl put forth her hand momentarily with a gesture of contrition, then let it drop to her side.

"Oh, Jim, why don't you wake up? Don't you see the opportunities all about you? Don't you see what other men are doing——"

"You mean Carter and Hazlett and the rest of them," Jim interrupted. He shook his head. "I don't want money that bad. Tom Carter is only a year older than I, and for three years he has been going to the Springs regularly for six weeks, and Teddy Hazlett is getting bald at the age of twenty-eight." He paused and gave Ruth a curious, level glance. "I guess maybe I *have* been dreaming—the wrong dream."

The girl turned her face away. A certain phrase occurred to her, a phrase she had read somewhere: "There are some things we can not conquer. The might-have-beens. The conqueror spirit breaks before them."

With a shrug of her shoulders she said:

"You're too easy-going, Jim, too indolent. Too easy-going even to look after your own interests," she added.

"A polite way of telling me that I am a lazy good-for-nothing. You needn't use gloves, Ruth. I got used to the mailed fist over in France."

"You're too humble, too modest," the girl continued, ignoring his flippancy. "Instead of asserting yourself, you permit everybody to bluff you, and use you to further their own interests."

"I always used to think that humbleness was a virtue," Jim remarked. "Besides I never saw anything in myself to be stuck up about."

"It is all right to be humble toward your inferiors, Jim. But self-assertiveness has its uses. A certain amount of arrogance is necessary to impress those who think they are better than you."

"I'd need a lot of arrogance, then," Jim grinned. "I never met a man yet who thought he wasn't better than I. I guess most of 'em were, all right."

"They were not!" the girl ejaculated with a sudden fierceness. She paused, cheeks aflame. "You only think so," she ended lamely.

Jim arose. A determined look came into his face. Stepping up to the girl quickly, he swept her in his arms and kissed her.

"There's a sample of my arrogance," he said.

"Oh," she cried, half breathless and thoroughly angry with him. "Oh, you——"

He laughed.

"The doctor doesn't like her own medicine," he scoffed.

Ruth Lane wasn't given to theatricals, so she merely picked up her hat quietly from the ground where it had fallen.

"You'll regret this, Jim," she said with flashing eyes. Then she turned upon her heel and walked down the trail.

"Never!" Jim called out after her. "It was the most wonderful thing in the world, Sweetheart."

He watched her slim form until it disappeared among the trees. Then he picked up his own hat and struck through the woods in the opposite direction.

RUTH'S birthday fell on the eighteenth of March. Jim telephoned her that morning and congratulated her, and Ruth thanked him with cool politeness.

"Are you still angry with me, Ruth?" he asked softly.

There was a moment's pause. Then Ruth's voice came back to him, "Yes, Jim."

"You won't let me come up this evening, then?" he said.

"You haven't asked me if you might," she parried.

"I'm asking you now. About eight?" Jim asked, and she assented.

Jim had dinner alone in the old rambling house back of the shingle-mill which, together with the mill, was his modest patrimony. He lived alone in this house, if a man can be said to be alone who has a middle-aged housekeeper to look after him.

His mother had died when Jim was twenty and his father had followed her a year after Jim had become of age. For four years Jim had run the old shingle-mill as well as he knew how, which, judging from other people's opinion, was not very well. Still he had managed to make the old circular saws slice him off between three and four thousand a year, without demanding too much of his six-hour working day.

Jim was a tall young fellow with long legs, good-natured blue eyes and a bumper crop of freckles and a complexion that promised to keep the crop outlook bright indefinitely.

His hobby was Ruth Lane. Ruth was the daughter of Samson Lane, and Samson Lane was a name to be conjured with on Humboldt Bay. He was president of the Orient-Pacific Maritime Company, a shipping concern that owned or controlled upward of a hundred bottoms from Seattle to San Diego. He was also owner of the Lane Mill and Lumber Company, the largest redwood band-mill on Humboldt Bay.

Ruth lived with her father in a big ornate house on top of the hill at the end of Avery Street. She was not born there. Both she and her father were Easterners. But Ruth had spent part of her girlhood and all of her young womanhood there, ever since her father was elected to the presidency of the Orient-Pacific shortly after her mother's death, ten years earlier.

Ruth had never felt at home in the big, gloomy house on Avery Street. The house had been built by a pioneer lumberman. It was paneled and parqueted with barbarous prodigality—even in those days burly redwood was worth a hundred and fifty dollars a thousand—and its high, coved ceilings were stenciled with garlands of flowers that would have defied classification by the most sanguinary of naturalists. The pioneer lumberman had found in his house expression for his hobby—fine grained woods; and his wife had found expression for hers—flowers.

The result was startling. It also evoked groans of despair from Ruth when she attempted to make the house habitable. But the view from the library windows was superb—the wide sweep of the bay, the mills, the wharves with their shipping and the bar, where the white-caps fought for admittance to the industrial treasure-trove in the sheltered arm of Humboldt Bay.

Jim drove his old roadster up the steep incline and brought the car to a stop at the lion-flanked buttresses of the steps—another evidence of the pioneer lumberman's sturdy taste—and shut off his engine.

Ruth heard him coming. As he walked up the steps, she looked out of the window and Jim waved his hat to her.

When he came into the library a moment later, he took both her hands, laughing. He said something in a teasing way about their last meeting, and Ruth flushed, but she did not withdraw her hands at once.

When she finally did so and took a seat beside him on the davenport in front of the blazing grate, she gave him a glance of quick scrutiny. There was something about him that was different, she thought. She did not know what it was. At first she thought it was his clothes, but at a second look she noted that he wore the same suit he had on when she saw him last.

"I called on your father to-day, Ruth," he said. "Oh, don't worry—not about our affairs," he hastened to assure her when he noted the startled look on her face. "Strictly business."

"Yes?"

"I'm in a funny sort of a hole," he went on. "The price of shingles was never better. The southern markets are begging for shingles. I've got three millions in the kiln ready for shipment, but I can't move a single bundle. The railroad yards are choked full of freight and every ship on the bay is tied up with freight contracts for six months ahead. Your father could do nothing for me. He said he was ninety days behind on deliveries himself."

"Oh!" Then, "What are you going to do?" she inquired.

He glanced at her quizzically.

"I guess I'll have to try some of my newly acquired arrogance. I've talked freight—softly and persuasively—till my head feels like the shock-absorber on a ten-ton truck. I've come to the conclusion that it will take either dynamite or arrogance to move my shingles, and dynamite is too expensive."

"I'll see father if you think it'll do any good, Jim——"

"You'll do nothing of the kind!" Jim retorted quickly, flushing. "I didn't come here to ask favors from Samson Lane through his daughter." Almost as quickly his voice dropped. "Just the same I appreciate your offer, Honey," he said softly.

He paused and drew from his pocket a small parcel.

"I almost forgot," he said as he handed her the parcel and watched her open it.

"Jim!" she exclaimed as she held up a tiny butterfly studded with finely cut brilliants to the firelight. The body of the butterfly was a single pear-shaped emerald.

"Like it?" he inquired.

"It's a beauty, Jim! But you ought not to have bought me such an expensive present." She glanced at his half-shabby clothes. "It's wicked of me to accept this from you."

"Well, I want you to be wicked for just this once," he grinned. "I've seen all your other moods."

Samson Lane came into the room then. Mr. Lane was a small, nervous man with a fringe of sparse white hair just above his ears and an Adam's apple that every little while threatened to get hung up for good on his collar. He was the sort of a man that you wanted to slap on the back and call Sam. But only one person had tried this and he was still going around in a daze wondering why the bottom had dropped out of his favorite stock just because he happened to bet his last dollar on it.

Just the same Mr. Lane's biblical namesake would have handed the clippers back to the lady barber and hollered for a close shave if he had seen how little hirsute growth was necessary to be a twentieth-century giant.

Mr. Lane looked from his daughter to the young man on the davenport beside her. "Harrump," he said with an agitated movement of his Adam's apple.

Jim arose.

"Good evening, Mr. Lane," he said.

"G'evening," Mr. Lane responded briefly. "Hope I'm not intruding," he added in a tone of voice that clearly indicated that if he was intruding, what were they going to do about it?

"Not at all," Jim hastened to assure him.

Ruth held out the butterfly in the palm

of her hand. "Isn't it beautiful, father?"

Mr. Lane took a step nearer. He peered at the bauble, frowning as if some new strange sort of a bug was being presented to him for classification.

"Uhu," he said. He glanced at Jim. "I just came down to tell you, Blake, that I'll take your shingles off your hands for three-sixty per thousand."

Jim glanced at Ruth. He shook his head.

"They cost me three-ten to produce. I'd be making a profit of only fifty cents per thousand."

"Your overhead's too high, then," Lane snapped. "I can't pay for extravagance."

"I didn't ask you to," Jim replied placidly. "I've got three million in the kiln ready to ship. But not one bundle leaves the kiln under four-ten per thousand. I'll get four-ninety in the south, and the freight runs about sixty cents per thousand."

"Southern California is a long way from here," Lane retorted.

"I know," said Jim; "but I'll get 'em there if I have to carry them on my back."

"Harrump," said Mr. Lane. "Well, think it over before you get stuck."

Jim smiled.

"I'll not get stuck," he replied. "I've shut down the mill for a month. My kiln is full. I don't turn a wheel until I get freight accommodations."

Mr. Lane turned on his heel.

"Well, I wish you luck," he said shortly—what he meant was quite the opposite—and left the room.

When he had gone, Jim winked at Ruth.

"Ninety days behind on deliveries," he scoffed. "He was in love with the daughter of a pirate," he hummed. "Sixteen men on a dead man's chest, Yo ho, and a bottle of rum."

THE next morning at the breakfast-table Mr. Lane broke his egg and the silence with deliberate care. While he scooped out the contents of the egg on top of the buttered bran toast he said to Ruth, "When are you going to stop wasting your time with that young Blake?"

"Let me see," said Ruth. "This makes the thirteenth time you've asked that question. Better ask it once more or the jinx'll get you."

Mr. Lane frowned impressively.

"Do you want me to—to——"

"Disinherit me?" Ruth supplied sweetly. "Not particularly."

Mr. Lane winced.

"I will if you ever marry that young loafer, I can tell you that," he muttered.

"Ouida would have been delighted," Ruth murmured.

"Who is that—Ouida?" Samson Lane inquired suspiciously.

"Oh, a friend of mine."

Mr. Lane glared at his daughter.

"If your Aunt Letitia permits you to associate with those low Bohemians, I'll never let you go to San Francisco again. I thought she had more sense."

Ruth smiled softly.

Mentally she pictured straight-laced Aunt Let hobnobbing with the old bunk known as "new thought." Aunt Let's chaste flat on Beacon Street had never been sacrileged by the footsteps of foreign agitators with the possible exception of the ice-man's, who agitated in Scandinavian, and only for the exclusive benefit of Alma, Aunt Let's Swedish cook.

Ruth glanced at her father. His ultimatum delivered, Mr. Lane proceeded to study the market reports of the morning paper for cracks where his industrial crow-bar might be inserted to pry off another chunk of loot.

"I'm leaving for San Francisco day after to-morrow," she announced calmly.

"You're what?" he demanded.

"Leaving for San Francisco," she repeated. "Aunt Let wants me to go with her to southern California for two weeks. We'll be at the Maryland, Pasadena."

Her father glowered at her.

"Am I not to be consulted about your movements?" he demanded. "You come and go in this house as if it was a hotel."

Ruth glanced about the wainscoted gloom of the dining-room.

"It ought to be—a hotel," she shuddered. "It looks like one."

"If it's good enough for me it's good enough for my daughter," Mr. Lane announced with the virtuous self-sufficiency of self-made America.

"Yes," Ruth admitted, "I suppose it ought to be. Still, tastes differ, you know."

"Grr-r-r," Mr. Lane observed. He rustled the morning paper aggressively. "Our tastes differ in a good many things. Young Blake, for instance——"

"It's only natural that our tastes should differ in that respect," Ruth interrupted. "Jim wants me to be his wife. He wants you merely to act as his father-in-law. Naturally our view-points would be different."

"Then he has asked you?" Mr. Lane howled.

"Oh, yes—a good many times. Otherwise I would not continue to see him. A girl is not interested merely in the color of necktie a man wears."

"And I suppose you've permitted him to kiss you?" Mr. Lane stormed.

"Not exactly—permitted him," Ruth murmured thoughtfully.

"You're not talking to me," Lane insisted. "That young mush-head hasn't got nerve enough to *take* anything unless it was handed to him on a silver platter."

"That's what I used to think," Ruth mused.

Mr. Lane's eyes narrowed.

"Perhaps it's just as well that you go to Pasadena with your Aunt Letitia," he said thoughtfully. "I'll tell Swanson to get the *Petrel* ready for sea."

"I had intended going to San Francisco by train," Ruth answered with a sigh.

"You'll go on the *Petrel* or not at all," Mr. Lane observed.

"Very well, father."

Ruth leaned back in her chair and smiled gently. She had learned that when she wanted anything from her father the surest way to get it was to make him think that she wanted something else.

She wanted the *Petrel*—for reasons of her own.

JIM was in the boiler-room that afternoon engaged in the prosaic task of cleaning out the boilers during the shut-down of the mill—when the door was pushed open gently.

He looked up. In the open doorway stood Ruth.

"Hello, Jim!" she said calmly.

Jim dropped the steel raking-rod on the cement floor and came to her side.

" 'Lo, Ruth," he grinned. He glanced at his soiled hands and overalls. "I'm hardly fit to entertain visitors."

"Mrs. Briggs told me where I could find you," Ruth explained with a nod in the direction of the house. "I'm going to southern California with Aunt Let for two weeks, so I thought I'd run over and say good-by."

"Yes," he answered dully.

"I was wondering—" The girl paused. "I am going down in the yacht, Jim. Suppose I get Captain Swanson to back the *Petrel* alongside your pier. Can you have a gang of men ready to load her with shingles? Swanson will do anything I tell him to. I asked him how many shingles he could accommodate. He said he thought about half a million. Half a million would help you, wouldn't it, Jim?"

"It would help me, yes," Jim replied gratefully. "But I couldn't permit you to do such a thing. I—I—think you're a brick, Ruth. But—" He shook his head. "It wouldn't do. Your father would be furious."

"Dad is leaving for Camp Ten to-morrow morning with a party of timber surveyors. He'll never know a thing about it—at least not until it's too late."

"Just the same," Jim objected, "I'd be taking an unfair advantage of him. And he'd never forgive you. No, it wouldn't do, Ruth."

"In other words, you're afraid to take the consequences," Ruth replied coldly.

Jim regarded her steadily.

"You're dead wrong, Ruth." He glanced at his blackened hands. "If it wasn't for messing you up, I'd kiss you just for that."

"I'd advise you not to," she said icily.

Turning on her heel, she slammed the door and left Jim to his dark occupation.

When she passed the house, Mrs. Briggs, the housekeeper, was sunning herself amply on the porch.

"If he had accepted my offer, I'd have hated him for life," she told Mrs. Briggs, and Mrs. Briggs stared at Ruth and shook her head uncomprehendingly.

THE Orient-Pacific Maritime Company owned three coastwise lumber schooners—fore-and-aft rigged vessels with auxiliary engines, a type of freighter designed especially for the redwood lumber trade. For years these three ships had been making from eight to ten trips a twelvemonth between Humboldt Bay and San Pedro, southern California, going down the coast loaded to the Plimsoll mark with lumber and returning to Humboldt Bay usually in ballast.

The three schooners were more like barges than ships—ugly, wide-beamed, blunt-nosed craft with six-knot oil-burner engines and ponderous cargo derricks; near-sisters to the river barge, unlovely as the river barge, but practical—and very profitable.

The romance of far ports and alien shores was not theirs. Their prows had never cleft the thousand-leagued sweep of sea from San Francisco to Singapore. Beasts of burden they were, great lumbering toilers performing their six-weeks stints between San Pedro and the sawmill-infested rivers of the north.

One of them, the *Cassie Alden*, sprung a leak—or rather opened wide an old leak—on her northbound trip in a squall off Point Dume.

The *Cassie Alden* was the oldest of the three. She had been built in Bath, Maine, and had been shipped in sections on flat cars to San Francisco. For twenty years she had tramped up and down the Californian coast. In that twenty years she had been in drydock only seven times. Her flat bottom was as woolly as the belly of a Merino sheep and contained grazing area for a flock of them.

On her down trips with a full load the pumps had to be kept going day and night. She used as much fuel-oil to keep afloat as she did to kick herself to port.

On her home trip she passed the southbound *Petrel* off Monterey. Angus McBeagle, her skipper, took a long squint with his telescope at the graceful *Petrel* flying south, a mile to leeward.

"That's the way with them wheat-wallopin' millionaire ship-owners," he growled. "They can spend thousands on brass trim an' plush seats for their yachts, but not a farthin' for their freighters. I hope to goodness she founders."

As if in defiance to this pious wish, the *Petrel* saucily ran up a pennant of greeting under her gaff, and McBeagle answered the signal with a curse.

"The old man's girl is aboard," the skipper growled to Riley, the mate, who was working the signal halyards. "I'm glad I'm not in Swanson's shoes. I see myself herdin' fe-males between *my* scuppers." He turned to the crew on the deck below, resting on the handle-bars of the pumps. They were watching the flying *Petrel*. "What the hell is the matter with you fellows?" he bellowed. "Ain't ye never seen a yacht before? Get them pumps agoin'. D'you want us to founder in mid-ocean?"

WHEN the *Cassie Alden* made Trinidad Light six days later, there were three feet of water in her hold, and when Captain McBeagle sighted the whitecaps of Humboldt Bar her scuppers were awash, so McBeagle hove to at four miles offing and signaled for aid.

Fifteen minutes later the company's tug, *Stormbird*, fought its way over the bar and hooked on to the *Cassie Alden's* hawser. On the bridge of the *Stormbird* was Samson Lane with a megaphone in his hand.

"Will she float long enough to be towed across the bar?" he shouted anxiously.

"Pull, damn you, and find out!" McBeagle retorted under his breath. Then, "She will float if you hurry," he shouted back.

Humboldt Bar is the official graveyard of the Pacific coast. When death-sentence is about to be passed by the marine insurance companies on a ship, the owners send her to Humboldt Bar for interment. Humboldt Bar has never been known to fail an owner in need of insurance. It is a simple matter to swing your ship broadside to the groundswell in crossing the bar and impossible to convict you of intentionally doing so, since the groundswell does it frequently on its own account.

The water-logged condition of the *Cassie Alden* made her most unmanageable. She rolled and pitched drunkenly in the groundswell at the end of the tug's hawser. Halfway across the bar she shipped a sea that caved in her midships hatch-covers. Half a hundred tons of sea water poured into her already half-filled hold.

When she staggered into the calm waters of the bay, she began to settle immediately.

"We're founderin'!" McBeagle bawled at the tug. "Pull, you Fenians. Pull!"

Samson Lane took the only course open to him—he ordered the skipper of the tug to beach the *Cassie Alden* at the nearest point handy.

The nearest point handy was a muddy bank in front of Jim Blake's shingle-mill. The skipper of the tug made for it, full speed, dragging the water-logged *Cassie Alden* behind him. Opposite Jim's loading platform the tug cast off her hawser and shot clear. The *Cassie Alden* kept on going in a straight line for two hundred yards. Then with a sigh of content she settled down in the mud alongside Jim's dry kiln.

"And that's that," said Captain McBeagle.

Jim stuck his head out of the door of the dry kiln and blinked his eyes.

"Well, well," he grinned. "Look who's here. Little Angus McBeagle and his bleedin' washtub."

"Yeh," the skipper retorted. "And I'm here to stay for a spell, if anybody should arsk ye." He craned his neck over the bulwarks and spat impressively into the turbid waters of the slough. "I'll be pickin' daisies under her stern on the next low tide."

WHEN the tide went out, the *Cassie Alden* lay in two feet of water with her pumps going full speed emptying the muddy slough water out of her.

When the tide was at its lowest ebb, the ship was pumped nearly dry; but as soon as the water began to rise again the racing pumps could not keep abreast of it. Her starboard seams had opened wide. The rising water came in as fast as the pumps sucked it out. McBeagle succeeded only in making a bog of slough mud of the bilges and clogging his pumps.

Jim was sitting, pipe in mouth, on a wharf stringer watching the performance with interest. The *Cassie Alden* was lying with a heavy list to port. The muddy slough water moved sluggishly through her gaping starboard seams as fast as the pumps sucked the water out of the hold and spewed it through the ship's scuppers in a four-inch stream of the consistency of pea soup.

Jim chuckled to himself. McBeagle evidently kept the pumps going for want of something better to do. Pumping was quite useless until the seams were calked, and calking her in her present position was out of the question. Some of the open seams were near the keelson, amidships, where they could not be got at without careening the ship.

Jim leaned over the stringer and glanced down. The suction caused by the laboring pumps was forming miniature eddies along the gaping seams as the muddy water was being sucked through them. Jim noted also that small drifting particles of weeds and sawdust were being sucked through the open seams with the water.

He watched a body of sawdust and fine shavings—refuse from the planing-mill five hundred yards up the slough—come drifting by within a few feet of the ship's side. So strong was the suction of the pumps that some of the shavings and sawdust became detached from the main body and were drawn into the open seams and stuck there.

He watched the phenomenon — at first with curiosity, then with growing interest.

His face grew thoughtful. Knocking the ashes from his pipe he arose and went back of the kiln to the pile of mill refuse under the conveyor and filled his pockets with sawdust.

Returning to his seat on the stringer he sprinkled the sawdust on the water. Almost immediately it was caught in the eddies and sucked into the seams of the ship.

McBeagle saw him and craned his neck over the bulwarks suspiciously.

"What the blazes d'ye think ye're doin'?" he inquired. He glared at Jim across the twenty feet of intervening space which separated the *Cassie Alden* from Jim's dry kiln.

"Feeding the swans," Jim informed him affably, and McBeagle turned his back upon him with a shrug of contempt and implored Heaven to explain to him how the daft ones escape utter annihilation.

ONE morning two days later when Samson Lane was in conference with Mr. Sargent, the local agent of the Marine Board of Underwriters, Miss Petrie, his private stenographer, knocked and informed him that Mr. James Blake was waiting to see him.

"Show him in," Lane replied. He turned to Sargent. "I suppose he's going to try to hold me up for damages for blocking his wharf," he grumbled. "Watch me squash him!"

Jim entered and closed the door behind him. He nodded to Sargent, then turned to Lane.

"I hope I'm not intruding," he said.

Instead of answering his question, Lane

said: "I suppose you're going to tell me that you have secured a freighter for your shingles and that the *Cassie Alden* will interfere with your loading."

Jim shook his head.

"If I told you that, I'd be a liar," he replied placidly. "The *Cassie Alden* is not in my way at present."

"Well?" Lane came back, somewhat mollified. "I'll have her off the mud in a week, Blake."

"You won't have her off in a year if you let McBeagle keep on doing what he is doing now—not unless you blow her up and drag her off in sections."

" 'Zat so?" Lane inquired testily.

Sargent cleared his throat.

"I think Blake is right, Mr. Lane," he ventured. "She can't be calked in her present position. We are ready to settle the full amount of the insurance and call her a total loss, and sell her for barge purposes."

Mr. Lane scowled. The full amount of insurance was about one-fifth of the value of the *Cassie Alden*, all he had been able to get. The *Cassie Alden* afloat was worth ten times this amount in future freight revenue.

"I don't want your money," he growled. "She's going to be floated off if it costs me ten thousand dollars to do it."

"I'll take the job for five thousand," Jim announced.

Lane's jaw dropped.

"You'll do what?"

"I'll float her off and deliver her in dry-dock for five thousand dollars," Jim repeated calmly.

"How?" Lane demanded. "Careen her?"

Jim shook his head.

"No, careening is too expensive. Besides, her bottom is too flat."

"How, then?"

"That's my secret," Jim smiled. "The question is, is it worth five thousand dollars to you to have the *Cassie Alden* delivered in dry-dock inside of thirty days?"

Mr. Lane threw up his hands in despair.

"Is it worth it, he asks!" He turned on Jim savagely. "Well, what d'you think! With freight rates where they are and every bottom tied up for a year ahead!"

"Then, if you'll sign an agreement to give me full charge and not to interfere with anything I do, I'll sign another agreement guaranteeing to deliver the *Cassie Alden* in dry-dock in thirty days from date," Jim informed him.

Lane squinted at Jim across the desk.

"I'd like to know what's under your bonnet," he said thoughtfully.

Jim grinned.

"It'll cost you five thousand to find out. Take it or leave it."

"I'd take it in a minute, young man, if I thought you could give me some sort of guarantee," Lane retorted.

"If that's all that's worrying you," Jim replied, "I'll put up a million shingles at the price you offered me—three-sixty—as a guarantee of good faith. You can put that in your agreement, too, if you like."

Lane blinked his eyes. He glanced at Sargent.

"I have a good mind to take him up," he said.

Sargent nodded.

"If you can keep the cost down to five thousand, Blake, I'll see that my company puts up a bonus of a thousand for you."

"I'll keep the cost down to *one* thousand," Jim grinned; "the other four is my profit."

Lane winked at Sargent, but he leaned over and pressed the bell on his desk.

"Miss Petrie," he said to his private stenographer, who answered the ring, "get a couple of contract forms and bring them to me. And get a notary up here in fifteen minutes, if you please."

When Mr. Lane was drawing up the agreements, Jim said:

"Remember, I don't specify any certain dry dock. Any dock in the State of California goes. I'm to use my own discretion."

"You can take her clear to San Pedro as far as I'm concerned," Lane growled good-naturedly. "If she'll float that far, I get my five thousand dollars' worth."

Jim smiled.

"Maybe I will," he thought, but he didn't say it aloud.

THE first thing Jim did when he left Lane's office was to stop at a hardware store and order a hundred yards of fine-meshed chicken wire. He paid cash for the wire and told the clerk to deliver it at once.

Ten minutes later he walked into the

office of the water-front fire department near the Orient-Pacific piers and asked to see the chief. The uniformed man at the desk jerked his thumb over his shoulder and pointed to a door behind him and Jim knocked.

A voice answered, "Come in," and a grizzled man looked up inquiringly from his desk as Jim entered.

"I want to borrow your fire-bug for a few hours for a pumping job, Chief," Jim said. "How much will it cost me?"

"You want to—what?" the chief demanded.

Jim repeated his request.

"It's for the *Cassie Alden*. I'm acting in behalf of the Orient-Pacific. We are willing to pay anything within reason. Our own pumps are clogged. I want you to bring the fire-tug alongside the *Cassie Alden* and stick a section of hose into each of the three hatches and pump like hell."

"This is a fire-department, not a pumping-station," the chief retorted coldly. He eyed Jim speculatively.

"How much are you willing to pay?" he asked on second thought.

"Ten dollars an hour, for the wear and tear on the machinery," Jim replied promptly. "A bonus of a hundred dollars for the crew of the tug and another bonus of a hundred for yourself."

The chief leaned back in his chair and surveyed Jim through half-closed eyes.

"What guarantee have I that I'll collect?" he asked.

"I'll make you out a check for the two bonuses now," said Jim. "The rest you get when the job is completed, at ten dollars per hour."

The chief sucked in his breath sharply.

"When do you want the tug?" he asked.

"On the next low tide," Jim replied.

The chief consulted the tide-chart on the desk before him.

"That'll be about two this afternoon," he said thoughtfully.

Jim nodded.

"Make it an hour earlier, say at one o'clock. It'll take us an hour or so to get ready for you."

"H'm," said the chief. He reached for his fountain pen and handed the pen to Jim. "Write out that check for two hundred now. I'll have the tug alongside the *Cassie Alden* at one o'clock." He paused. "Understand, if there's fire some place they'll have to pull away and leave you."

"I'll take the chances on that," Jim replied.

"Another thing," the chief added, "mum's the word. If the harbor board should hear that I loaned their fire-tug to pump out an old tub that ought to have been buried in the mud five years ago, there'd be murder."

"They'll never know," Jim assured him easily. "If they should get wind of it, I'll tell them that I sent in a fire-alarm by mistake."

WHEN Jim returned to the mill, he found that the wire netting had been delivered. He also found that Lane had sent word to McBeagle to give him the run of the ship. When Jim sent the wire netting aboard the *Cassie Alden* and followed the netting over the bulwarks himself, the skipper scratched his head and stared hard.

"What in blazes d'ye think ye're goin' to do? Make a hen-house out of her?" he demanded.

"Nope," said Jim, "a swan's nest."

The skipper retired with a snort to the poop-deck, wherefrom he watched operations with a sour smile.

Jim's first step was to have three of the crew get into the dory and stretch a piece of the wire netting from the bow of the *Cassie Alden* to a wharf-piling directly opposite, with the top edge of the netting just above high-water mark. This performance he repeated at the stern of the ship.

The *Cassie Alden* was lying twenty feet from the wharf, so in this manner an enclosure twenty feet wide by about two hundred feet long—the length of the ship—was formed.

Next he built a stout runway of two-inch planks from the door of the dry-kiln to the bulwarks of the *Cassie Alden* 'midships. Then he had half of the crew begin wheeling sawdust and shavings from the refuse pile behind the mill in wheelbarrows and dump the sawdust into the netted enclosure.

Captain McBeagle sat on the bridge watching the performance. His face was a study. When some fifty wheelbarrows of sawdust and shavings had been dumped into the enclosure, Jim had the men stretch the rest of the wire netting horizontally the whole length of the enclosure on top of the floating sawdust to keep it evenly distributed and prevent it from being carried in a body to the lower end of the enclosure with the outgoing tide.

That was too much for Captain McBeagle. He heaved a sigh of disgust and went below.

Jim had just completed his work when the fire-tug blew its whistle and hove alongside the *Cassie Alden*, at a distance of thirty feet, as near as she could get.

Jim had the crew of the tug pass a four-inch section of suction hose through each of the three hatchways and begin pumping. Then he opened the door of the dry-kiln, sent half of the crew of the *Cassie Alden* into the hold and put the rest to wheeling the kiln-dried shingles across the runway on trucks.

The tide was nearly out, and the two feet of water in the *Cassie Alden's* hold fell at the rate of half an inch a minute before the combined efforts of the fire-tug's three powerful suction hose.

When the water had dropped to the bilges, Jim had the crew tear up the bilge-boards and begin stowing bundles of kiln-dried shingles between the ribs. As soon as a level floor three bundles high and covering the entire bottom of the hold had been made, he had the men run two-by-four redwood scantlings from side to side across the top layer of shingles. The ends of the scantlings he spiked securely to the ribs to keep the bundles of shingles from rising with the inrushing water on the next high tide.

Then he had some of the men reach over the side with poles and force under water the sawdust imprisoned under the wire netting to make sure that the sawdust fed the open seams under the ship's bottom amidships. The rest of the crew kept loading the shingles into the ship as fast as ten men could work.

At three o'clock, when the tide began to come in again, the pumps of the fire-tug were able to keep the water from rising in the hold. Jim climbed aboard the tug and stood by the pumps, watching, while the crew of the *Cassie Alden* emptied his dry-kiln. So terrific was the combined suction of the fire-tug's three hose that the sawdust and shavings were drawn through the gaping seams of the *Cassie Alden* and discharged through the scuppers of the tug together with the water.

For an hour Jim stood by, watching the pumps anxiously. Gradually the amount of sawdust discharged began to diminish. At the end of the hour very little passed through the pumps with the water.

At the end of another hour the skipper of the tug reported his pumps dry and stopped his engines.

Jim smiled. His theory was sound. The wet sawdust had swelled and in swelling had clogged the gaping seams of the *Cassie Alden* as he had figured it would. The three layers of shingles spiked down to the bilges by the scantlings would, together with the displacement pressure of the water from without, hold the sawdust in place.

He had won!

At dark the *Cassie Alden*, loaded to capacity, floated clear on the eight-o'clock high tide and was towed across Humboldt Bar by the Orient-Pacific's tug *Stormbird*, and headed south.

Aboard was Mr. James Blake and two million of his kiln-dried redwood shingles.

"Man," said McBeagle when he and Jim were pacing the bridge, while the crew was setting the topsails to catch every breath of the stiff northwester that had begun to blow as soon as they had cleared the bar, "ye must a kissed a mermaid, ye're that lucky."

"Wrong again, Mac," Jim replied. "It was an angel I kissed."

WHEN Captain Whipple of the tug *Stormbird* came into Samson Lane's office the next morning in answer to Mr. Lane's message, the old tow-boat skipper glanced uneasily at his employer.

Mr. Lane pointed to a chair beside his desk and Captain Whipple slumped into the chair, shuffling his feet embarrassedly. Samson Lane fixed him with cold, fishy eye.

"What do you mean by casting loose of a vessel that's liable to founder any minute, Whipple?" he demanded.

Captain Whipple fingered the visor of his cap nervously.

"I didn't know you wanted me to convoy the *Cassie Alden* to San Pedro, Mr. Lane," he defended.

Lane sat up with a jerk. His bald head shot forward.

"Who said the *Cassie Alden* was going to San Pedro?" he asked.

"McBeagle did—and that young Blake," said Whipple.

"The devil they did! What's the matter with the Frisco dry-dock? She'll never stay afloat as far as San Pedro. I'd like to know what Blake is up to. They'll lay and founder somewhere along the coast."

"I don't think the *Cassie Alden* will founder with two million kiln-dried shingles aboard," Captain Whipple objected mildly.

"What!" Mr. Lane leaned forward in his chair and fixed Captain Whipple with a baleful glance. "What d'you mean, two million shingles?"

"Blake's shingles," Whipple replied. "He just about emptied his kiln into her. He said it was no use going down empty. Might as well use the down trip to some good purpose."

"Good purpose!" Lane howled. "The pirate! Sneaks out of port with my ship filled with his damn shingles. I'll have him arrested for—for—" He paused. He wondered suddenly what he could have Jim Blake arrested for. He was acutely conscious that the Solons of maritime affairs had neglected to frame a statute to cover Jim Blake's case—especially since Jim was flying south with an iron-bound agreement giving him full powers over the *Cassie Alden's* movements for thirty days. Mr. Lane knew that the agreement was iron-bound. He had drawn it up himself. Iron-bound agreements were his specialty.

"Then you didn't know?" Captain Whipple interjected in surprise.

"Know!" Mr. Lane repeated with the silkiest of sarcasm. "Of course I knew, Whipple!" He wagged his bald head. "I don't need my ships! My lumber can lay and rot on my wharves! Know!" He arose, trembling with rage, and shook his fist in the skipper's face. "Get out of here!" he roared. "No, stop! Have the *Stormbird* ready for sea in an hour. I'll show that pirate a thing or two!"

THE *Stormbird* was the most powerful of the Orient-Pacific's tugs. She was designed for deep-sea towage. Her engines were of the latest type, twin steam turbines capable of developing a horsepower for every pound of their weight. She was built like a fighter—high-bowed as a fighter—and slim of stern. She represented the new era in marine progress She was efficient, invitable—a hundred-foot giant encased in steel armor.

But, like all tug-boats, she was built for utility, not speed. There was no limit to what she could pull behind her. She could handle a fifteen-thousand-ton disabled freighter and berth her in the twinkling of an eye. But twelve knots per hour was her maximum speed. She had been known to make this speed in the teeth of half a gale, but she had never been known to exceed it in even the calmest of calms.

The *Cassie Alden* was driving south with every rag set and her auxiliary engines adding four knots to her canvas speed. The wind was on her aft port quarter, a good stiff breeze, and not an ounce of it was wasted. From the time she cleared Cape Mendocino she had been logging nine knots, and when she passed the Golden Gate she was making ten, with the breeze stiffening every hour.

A hundred miles astern the *Stormbird* was lumbering in her trail with a gain of two knots per hour.

Off San Miguel Island, on the third day, the *Cassie Alden* ran into a westerly gale. She tried to make the inside passage, but failed to clear Point Bennett, so McBeagle furled his topsails and headed for the open sea to ride out the gale.

The *Stormbird* took the inside passage and sighted the *Cassie Alden's* smoke through Santa Cruz channel at dusk on the evening of the same day after a sixty-hour run. The tug shot through the channel into the teeth of the gale and gave chase.

Lane was on the bridge with Captain Whipple. He took one look at the *Cassie Alden* through his telescope before darkness came. Then he went below with a growl after telling Whipple what would happen to him if he lost the *Cassie Alden* during the night.

Nine o'clock came, with the gale increasing every moment. By eleven o'clock it had assumed the proportions of a hurricane. The skipper shut his engines down to half speed and held the *Stormbird* head-on into the storm.

When Lane came up on the bridge shortly before midnight, he found Captain Whipple in the binnacle-house with the helmsman.

"We sighted the *Cassie Alden's* starboard light half an hour ago," Whipple informed him. "She was on her port tack to leeward, so I veered a couple of points to keep from cutting across her bow and ramming her." He paused and pointed into the gale. "She's a couple of miles on our port quarter now. McBeagle will probably heave to on his next tack. He'll have sea-room enough then. He'll clear the Anacapa shoals with five miles offing."

As if in answer to his remark, the inky pall ahead was pierced by a shaft of light that seemed to rise out of the black pit of the sea, hang suspended in midair for a moment, then die with a sudden brief flare.

Captain Whipple gripped Lane's arm.

"A rocket!" he exclaimed. "She's foundering." With a quick movement his hand gripped the handle of the engine-room telegraph and gave it a twist. The indicator shot to "Full speed ahead." "Port your helm," he said tersely over his shoulder to the helmsman.

The wheel spun around in the man's hand. The *Stormbird* leaped forward and drove her blunt nose savagely into the teeth of the hurricane, clawing her way through the westerly seas that came tumbling over her bows and raked her from stem to stern.

Captain Whipple wiped the glass of the binnacle with the sleeve of his oilskin coat.

"Hold her steady as she lies. West-southwest, half west," he said to the helmsman. He turned to the speaking-tube on his right. "Tom," he said to the assistant engineer at the other end of the tube, "get some oakum and soak it in kerosene for flare lights and bring it up on the bridge. And hurry. The *Cassie Alden* is foundering to leeward."

He turned to Lane.

"McBeagle must have gone 'bout ship. He probably crossed our bows in the squall a while ago, just before you came on deck. That's how we missed seeing his larboard light."

Again the blackness was cut by a flare of light. This time dead ahead. The flare was briefer than before. The rocket did not rise as high the last time. It hung suspended in the gale for a moment, then died with a feeble splutter and was swallowed up in the darkness.

"Poor shot," Whipple commented.

The assistant engineer came into the binnacle house with a wire crate filled with oil-soaked oakum.

"Tie it to the port boat-davit and set it off, Tom," Captain Whipple said.

The assistant engineer nodded and passed out of the door in a rush of storm-driven water. Lane and the skipper stood side by side watching.

"The *Cassie Alden* must have made a lot of leeway to get that near the shoals," the skipper commented. "She ought to have cleared them easy. The only thing I can figure is that her engine-room flooded and killed her boilers."

Lane nodded. He turned with a start as the binnacle room was illuminated with a sudden flare of light from the torch tied to the iron davit outside. The light flooded the small space with an eery, malignant radiance that rose and fell with the savage gusts of the wind.

LANE glanced at Captain Whipple. The expression on the skipper's face was no longer cringing, nor even humble. For the moment Captain Whipple was a supreme autocrat, holding in his hands the fortune of his ship and crew. For a few brief hours his word was law. Samson Lane, millionaire ship-owner, existed not at all.

The helmsman, too, his face graven in stone while he executed the skipper's tersely spoken commands, ignored Lane. Lane glanced furtively at the man's gigantic shadow silhouetted against the opposite wall.

For the first time in his life Samson Lane felt utterly superfluous. He peered out of the window. Another rocket rose dead ahead.

"They've seen our signal," Whipple said, addressing no one in particular.

Tom, the assistant engineer, came into the binnacle-room then, shaking the water from his sou'wester. He did not even as much as glance at Lane when Whipple said, jerking his thumb over his shoulder at the door of the radio-room:

"Better call Point Fermin, Tom, or anybody you can pick up in the neighborhood. We're going to have our hands full."

The assistant engineer nodded and passed into the radio-room, leaving the door open.

A moment later Lane heard the hiss of

the sending-spark as the man called for help. Then suddenly the sound stopped.

Captain Whipple turned on his heel.

"Keep calling, Tom," he said sharply. "Don't quit until you get an answer."

"Just a minute," the man shouted. "I'm getting something— What the——"

His words were cut off in a roar of rushing water. The windows of the binnacle-house were shivered to bits. A deluge of storm-driven water struck the house to windward and caved the door in, filling the narrow space waist-deep with water. The wheel was torn from the helmsman's grasp and the man was flung into the corner, stunned.

With an oath the skipper sprang to the spinning wheel and himself was flung bodily against the wall.

Lane, up to his armpits in water, was floundering about helplessly, trying to regain his footing. When he finally did so, Captain Whipple was hanging on the wheel and cursing. Between the skipper's curses Lane caught two words:

"Rudder—gone."

Lane glanced querulously at the oilskin-coated helmsman, who had risen to his feet and was shaking himself dazedly like a huge, sleek dog.

Captain Whipple was leaning over the speaking-tube, bawling a string of orders at the engine-room.

Then above the roar of the wind and the rush of the swirling water came another voice—the voice of Tom, the assistant engineer—from the wireless-room:

"Steam yacht *Petrel*, Captain Swanson, struck Anacapa Shoal. Sinking four miles offshore."

Lane gripped Captain Whipple's arm.

"The *Petrel!* My daughter!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

The skipper nodded. He glanced at Lane sharply.

"I was wondering how the *Cassie Alden* came to be that far south," he commented.

"You are wondering!" Lane screamed. "This is no time to wonder! My—daughter is—aboard——"

His words were clipped off in staccato gasps by the fury of the gale, and from the wireless-room, beyond, came Tom's, the assistant engineer's, voice as from the depth of a cavern:

"They're getting ready to launch the boats. Operator says they're settling fast. Point Fermin's sending assistance. Also freighter *Markheim* twenty miles to the south. Operator of the *Petrel* says they'll try to hold on until we come. He says—There goes his fuse!"

The assistant engineer came out of the door of the radio-room.

"Their outfit's out of commission. As near as I can judge, they're about two miles to leeward," he informed Captain Whipple. He stared at the useless wheel swinging back and forth.

The skipper nodded.

"Our rudder's gone, Tom," he said quietly. "Better go below and bear a hand. We've got all we can do to save ourselves."

"I tell you, my daughter is aboard the *Petrel*," Lane screamed. "My daughter—d'you hear?"

"I heard you," the skipper replied laconically. "Our rudder is gone; but I'll do what I can. It is lucky for you this is a twin-screw boat or we'd have been gone by now ourselves. Maybe we will be anyhow," he added under his breath.

TO STEER a twin-screw boat in smooth water by alternate manipulation of the propellers requires skill and experience. To do it in the teeth of a hurricane with a mountainous sea running requires more than skill. Experience does not enter into the consideration. Few men have attempted it and returned to tell how they did it. It is doubtful if they could have told. It takes courage to attempt it and imagination to get away with it; but it takes more instinct than imagination or courage.

You must gage to a nicety, twice every minute, the turning power of one propeller and be on the alert to meet it with a quick stroke of the other. It is an endless game of reverse, forwards, half-speeds and full speeds, to keep your ship head on to the sea.

A momentary relaxing of vigilance and your ship will be smashed to kindling-wood.

In the wrecked binnacle-room Captain Whipple stood working the handle of his telegraph with one foot braced against the binnacle stanchion. Except for the occasional quick movement of his right hand when he shifted the indicator back and forth over the dial of the telegraph, he never moved a muscle.

At the table in the wireless-room sat Lane, staring at the instrument that had flashed to him the news of his daughter's predicament. And Samson Lane, the twentieth-century giant, Samson Lane, who held in the hollow of his hands the fortunes of thousands, Samson Lane, the dictator, slumped forward upon the table and buried his face in his hands.

Presently he arose and joined Captain Whipple in the binnacle-room. He did not ask the question he had come to ask, but the skipper answered it:

"There hasn't been a signal for over half an hour, Lane!"

Lane noted abstractedly the absence of the prefix Mr. when the skipper addressed him.

He nodded.

"We will stand by until daylight," Whipple added. "The wind will have died down by then. Perhaps we can pick up the boats."

"You think a life-boat could live in a sea like this?" Lane asked.

"I have known them to," Whipple replied. "We'll stand by on the chance."

Anderson, the mate, came into the binnacle-room then.

"Six feet of the starboard bulwarks carried away amidships by that last sea, Captain," the mate announced.

"All right, Anderson," the skipper answered without turning his head. "Better string life-lines along the deck to windward and call the deck-hands on the bridge. Have a couple of men stand by the lashings of the larboard life-boat. Get your water-breakers ready and a keg of hardtack."

"Yes, sir."

"And, Anderson, tell the cook to pass hot coffee around to all hands. We've got a long night ahead of us."

"The galley was wrecked in the sea that broke the rudder, sir," Anderson replied.

A frown passed over Captain Whipple's face.

"Go down and get my keys, then, from the hook over my bunk and get a bottle of brandy from the mess-room locker, and pass out a drink to all hands."

"Yes, sir."

"Report to me when all are on the bridge."

"Yes, sir!"

*Everybody's Magazine, September, 1921*

THAT March storm with its trail of wreckage from Monterey to Capistrano will be remembered long by the dwellers of the coast of southern California. Even the sheltered channel ports of the Santa Barbara and San Pedro channels suffered. Piers were overthrown, bulwarks battered to pieces and crafts of all sizes were driven ashore upon the flat sandy beaches.

The ships that weathered the storm returned to port with their crews dazed and half-frozen and their upper works smashed to kindling.

The *Stormbird* was an unusually stanchly built ship, but her disabled condition put her at a great disadvantage. She plunged, heaved, reared and groaned, raked from stem to stern by tons, hundreds of tons, of fury-whipped seas. Mountains of them piled up in front of her, collapsed over her bows, and raced down her decks, carrying everything before them. For minutes at the time she lay smothered in cataracts of it. Her bulwarks were torn out of her, her life-boats were smashed, every movable object was torn, shattered or disintegrated.

In the binnacle-room stood Captain Whipple, impassive as a statue, while his ship was being battered to pieces under his feet, and beside him stood Lane, white-faced and silent.

Until dawn they stood thus. No word had passed between them for hours.

Captain Whipple was the first to break the silence. He pointed to the east and said:

"It'll be daylight in an hour," and Lane nodded.

"The wind is easing off," the skipper added.

Again Lane nodded. He turned his face eastward and stared at the faint streak of crimson that rose over the rim of the boiling caldron of the sea.

For half an hour he stood motionless, clinging to the shattered sash of the window, staring at the angry dawn. He saw nothing but fury-whipped seas and phalanx after phalanx of thundering white-caps. Then he turned and staggered to his cabin.

Anderson, the mate, found him there half an hour later, slumped into a chair among the wreckage.

"The *Cassie Alden* is bearing down upon us, a mile to starboard," the mate informed him.

Lane looked at Anderson dazedly and followed him up on the bridge.

The wind had died down to a moderate breeze. To windward lay the *Cassie Alden*, staggering drunkenly, double-reefed, in the choppy seas. Lane stared hard. From the *Cassie Alden's* gaff fluttered a small pennant in answer to the *Stormbird's* distress signal.

Fifteen minutes later the *Cassie Alden* hove to a cable length to leeward of the *Stormbird*.

From the bridge of his schooner McBeagle hailed the disabled tug with his megaphone.

"Ship ahoy! Who are you and what's your trouble?"

"Tug *Stormbird*. Rudder broke. Mr. Lane aboard," Captain Whipple answered.

"Suffering cats!" McBeagle exclaimed. "The *Stormbird!* You look more like a barrel with hoops knocked off," he grinned. He crossed to the cabin skylight.

"Hey, Blake," he called down the skylight. "Tell the young lady and her aunt that Mr. Lane has come for them." He turned and looked at the battered tug to windward. "Oh, boy!" he muttered. "For once in my life I'll have you at the wrong end of my hawser, Whipple. *Stormbird*, ahoy!" he bawled. "Stand by to take my hawser. Tell Mr. Lane that we took the passengers and crew off the yacht *Petrel* at three o'clock this morning. The *Petrel* sank four miles off Anacapa Shoals."

AT DAYLIGHT the following morning a strange procession passed around the end of the San Pedro breakwater—the *Cassie Alden* waterlogged, but floating on two million kiln-dried shingles, dragging at the end of her hawser the battered remains of the *Stormbird*, the Orient-Pacific's most powerful tug.

From the bridge Ruth Lane surveyed the wreck at the end of their hawser.

"Father must have had a worse time of it than we did, Jim," she said.

"I shouldn't wonder," Jim replied. "But the freight I owe him for the shingles will pretty nearly pay for the damage to the tug, and the *Petrel* was insured for more than she was worth." He pinched Ruth's cheeks playfully. "All he loses is a perfectly good daughter."

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who played with a buzz-saw

*In October* EVERYBODY'S *Out September 15*

# Mama's Boy

## *Every Man Remembers His First Scrap—Maybe It Was Similar to This One—Another Prize Ring Story*

## By William Bullock

*Author of "The Hereditary Punch"*

Illustration by L. Evans Parcell

WE HEADED out of Madison Square Garden with the hoarse yells of the frenzied spectators ringing in our ears. Jackie Farley had knocked out Pete Berman, the latest aspirant for the feather-weight honors. Berman had been cutting great shines up and down the Coast, in the fly-by-night oil regions and the woolly mining camps. At last they had brought him on to take the belt from our East Side Terror, Jackie Farley. And Jackie had run through him in three rounds like water taking a greased chute downhill.

No, they couldn't stop that youngster. Four times in four months he had glanced down at a hand-picked challenger kicking in the rosin, then turned his back on him and trotted to his corner, knowing full well what the count would be and who was the proud and mighty king of the feathers.

He had sent Dave Crotty back to New Orleans in a worse condition than if he had been on crutches. With a straight right and left and one short hook to the jaw he had tamed a Canuck pretender. Then the Whitechapel Wonder had come over the briny, hollering defiance in his British lion's way, and Jackie had started him home again, crying in a ship's hammock and seeing stars from a mighty blow in his midriff.

Now the Frisco Wildcat, Pete Berman by name, was in the discard, and Jackie was up in the dust of the rafters jumping into his clothes, and I, with Tim Breslin, Jackie's manager, was wandering at the tail end of the howling mob coming out of the big arena, leaving it once again in possession of its ghosts of gladiators, reaching all the way back to little Charley Mitchell and big John L. and to the attendant ghosts of Roman hordes, splitting the air for their new champions and turning down thumbs for the old.

"Jackie's got to tell his gang from the Gas House District all about it," remarked the great manager, handing over a huge cigar and nipping the end off its mate. "Let's taxi up to the flat and see if the missis can't hunt us up some home brew."

It was with something akin to joy that Mrs. Breslin received us; for the news of Jackie's victory had traveled by phone, and the night before she had dreamed of the Frisco Wildcat with a crown on his close-cropped red head, and at breakfast had spilled the salt, and later in the day, when out buying the groceries, had walked under a ladder without seeing it. So good cheer was waiting us, and the table was spread with home brew and all.

We had come to the point of lighting up another batch of the big Havanas and the clean blue smoke was beginning to rise fast. We were happily and completely contented; for we had seen as pretty a scrap as any red-blooded man could ask to see, and our champion had come out of the ring with the bacon under his arm. We had proved the spirits of our forefathers by inspiring drafts of Mrs. Breslin's brewing, and there was not a thing in the world bothering us.

"The way Jackie lays them out with their toes turned up is like taking candy from a baby," observed my genial and philosophic host. "It makes me laugh when I think of the days when it was the hardest kind of sledding. It makes me think of one, of half a dozen, aye, of a score of bums I picked up here and there, and managed to my sorrow, thinking all the while I was pointing them to the championship." He paused, smiling as if thinking with pleasure of the East Side Terror, and then moved to settle back. "Jackie makes me think of one boy——"

Mrs. Breslin stopped him by pushing away her chair and standing looking at him with wifely disapproval. "I've seen it coming on you this quarter-hour or more," she remarked. "It always takes him the same way," she added, addressing herself to me. "Give him one of his fat cigars and a nice glass and he'll start, all wound up. He's an awful windbag." Then, looking straight at her husband once more, "I'm not going to listen to you, and for pity's sake go easy on him." With a parting word and glance at me, as if never expecting to see me alive again, she left us then and there and went out down the long hall.

Tim eased himself down in his big chair and ran his strong fingers through his short, thick, iron-gray hair. "Maybe, now, you wouldn't want to hear the yarn?"

"Yes, I do," I allowed emphatically. "Give it to me, and don't cut any of it out."

"You're talking the way I like to hear a man talk," he returned; then puffed silently for a few moments, as if calling things back, and then flicked his ash into the receiver, and so began:

I'VE always been a great one for having a stable full—once I had a dozen scrappers in my string. But that's neither here nor there. The time I speak of, I had one pet that had got me to thinking of the middleweight crown. I'd picked him up in Pueblo, of all places on the map, and had brought him by easy stages into New York. I'd got him booked for a six-round prelim up at the old Osceola Club, and had him working out in a ready-made gym behind Paddy Madigan's feed-store and livery-stable. It wasn't just what I wanted, but purses wouldn't weight you down so you'd notice it those days. Madigan and me had been boys together, and the ring in the back yard worked right well.

The Pueblo flash had just come in after a trot in Central Park and was in the ring going five rounds with a lightweight, another lad of mine. I was leaning up against one of the posts watching them work, when there was the awfullest skirling I ever heard, and in through the wide-open double gate ran a bit of a boy, doing his darndest to leave behind a lot of the roughest Indians of kids you'd find anywhere in the Big Town.

"Here, here, what's this goin' on?" I called, and turned to find the youngster up against my shins, sticking to me like glue, and as scared as a rabbit. The gang gathered round and let me know in a second. "That's mama's boy," they hollered. "Make him leave go of you, and we'll paste him good."

"All right," I said, never thinking; and catching the kid by an arm, I yanked him free and set him down on his feet. Before you could wink he was off again, ducking and dodging, with them chasing him round and round the big cobblestoned yard. I thought it was lots of fun, but I couldn't help feeling sore at the young un, he was that far from the kind of kid he ought to have been.

Finally he dodged past the ring and headed out in the lead, with nothing between him and a clean getaway through the open gate. Just when he was about making it, a missing member of the gang came into view, saw what was up, and slammed the gate in front of mama's boy. I looked to see big doings then. And that's just what took place.

The runaway stopped in his tracks as if he'd got a haymaker on the chin. He stood looking ahead of him at the big gate, tight shut, with the bolt home fast. The pursuing gang was at his heels, reaching for him. He gave them a slant over his shoulder, and beat it in a flash over to me.

"Gimme a chance, mister," he piped, "an' I'll lick 'em all, one after t'other."

That's the kind of speech always gets me. I shooed all the little rascals off and waved my middleweight and lightweight out of the ring. "Pick one of your gang," I said to the kids standing round, muttering, "and I'll put the pair of you in the ring." On the second they all stepped out. "Naw, one at a time," I said. "Stand back there," I went on, driving at them. "I'll do the picking, and give you both a fair show."

That sounded good to them, and then I looked down at the morsel of humanity, rising little higher than my belt-buckle. Suffering cats! Sizing him up, I got quite a shock. He looked as if a breath of wind would lift him and leave him sticking against the wall like a postage-stamp. He wasn't much thicker than a war sandwich, and he had white hands on him that reminded me of the things on a year-old baby's Christmas doll. But that wasn't it, so especially. He was dressed with silk stockings and patent-leather pumps and flossy fixings; he had on the cutest tie, all the trimmings of a kid dandy, and his black hair was in curls down on his pearly forehead and round his pinky ears. He sure enough was mama's boy. And when I peeked closer—good Lordy, his bits of nails was manicured!

"You sure you want to fight, little lady?" I asked him, feeling like offering him a rattle.

"Gimme a chance," he put back; and I thought I'd let them go at it and stop it before any great harm could befall the little bunch of sweetness. I picked out the smallest of the glowering, touseled gang, then felt a pluck on my sleeve. It was his honor, the burnished-up doll, and he was pointing at the biggest husky of the unwashed crew. "I want him, mister," said the mite. "Get him, please, mister?"

I wondered if I was dreaming, but I *got* him. And I staged it like the real article. I put the middleweight and a false-alarm heavy I had hanging around in the corner with the big fellow, and I went myself with the lightweight behind the human sliver, dolled up like a fop. And we made great ceremony of getting the buckets and the big towels and the black bottles for them to suck on between rounds. And, best of all, it was to be one of those old-time affairs when men fought as men—when they lambasted each other with the bare uns.

WELL, sir, we had it all set, and I was ready for the laugh of my life. We'd brought Paddy Madigan back from his feed-bags in the store, and he acted as if he was referee at a world's championship. He called them to the middle of the ring for instructions, and of course the middleweight and myself, as chief seconds, got in a helluva argument. And we had the shoulders of the kids draped with the big towels, hiding a week's accumulation on the neck of the husky guerrilla, and not showing half as white as the scrubbed and polished velvet pelt of mama's boy. We got all arranged at last, and then over in our corner I sounded the gong by kicking the waterbucket. Already I was starting to laugh, and then— Say, you won't believe it!

Out went my little fellow like a charge of dynamite. He was into the big bully in the far corner before you could bat an eye, and was hopping blows off him like hail off a tin roof. He pinned the big boy right in the corner, and fed him with both mitts so fast I looked for a knockout right away. Honest, I did. And I stood there, not laughing any more, but with my eyes fairly popping. For fast as my little beauty's fists were flying, my mind was flying still faster. He was fifteen or so. In three years or thereabouts I saw myself managing the champ of all the universe.

Madigan stepped between them and saved the big fellow from certain slaughter. And, wishing to see a fight with two in it, he took them out to the middle and started them off again. Gee whiz! Mama's boy stepped around better and better. He was a sure-enough wonder. And he could never go wrong.

Get them with the spirit and teach them the tricks, and you've only got a half fighter. When the going gets hot, they'll forget all you've ever told them and start slugging like a truck-driver. But not that way with my little tearaway. When they come natural to the fighting ways, like he sure did, then they're all to the mustard and more besides. Then a manager can sleep easy nights; then he can pick out his town house and his country estate and buy a steam yacht, if he wants to. For no matter how tall-walloping a bout may grow, why, your natural champ will go to the finish the way he was born. Yes, sir; and there before my own two eyes was the boy I'd been looking for all these years!

He was handing them out the prettiest you ever did see. His black curls weren't even getting dusted. He was hitting straight with right and left like he was Jim Corbett. He was stepping round that ring as sure and steady as Joe Gans, and as quick, when needs be, as Abe Attel. He didn't have one wild swing in his system, and the way he blocked and picked them out of the air made me think of the fanciest of the lot—Young Griffo. Madigan looked over at me, and says he, "You've got a bearcat, Tim."

"Surest thing you know, Paddy," I put back, all gleeful. "This kid is Terry McGovern, George Dixon and Young Corbett all rolled into one."

Now all this didn't take more'n a minute, and there wasn't a Chink's chance of it going the full round. And, at that, the big lad that was getting the basting was game as they come. All that was wrong with him was he wasn't the class. But he kept on trying with fists in his eyes and his nose and his ears, till Madigan, agreeing with me, thought he'd got enough and moved to stop it.

He was just starting to pull them away, when something awful happened. My prize-winner went blooey. He slowed up, and, jumping juniper! began to blub. Can you beat it? Right off, my heart went into my shoes. All the hopes I'd been building up, and—the kid wasn't game. I could see it quicker'n you could think. Sure!

He'd been on the receiving end of a wild wallop. I'd seen it wing over, and then there he was just doing what they do every day—quitting. Oh, I didn't need no one to tell me. My town house and country estate and steam yacht was fading fast from sight! And the very next thing he took a flop to the canvas, and started yelping like he'd cry his heart out. Jeerusalem! I felt like slopping the bucketful clean on top of him. But before that necessary bit of business could be decided one way or the other, I heard a shrill treble raised in protest, and glanced round and—there she was!

My kiddo's mother! She was coming out of the back door, through the feedstore. And she had her Irish up and blood in her eye. I don't like to think, much less specify, what mama said to all of us and to me in particular. But I'll tell you this: Not a single word one of us put back in reply. She gathered her darling in her arms and smoothed him down like he was delicate as a teething babe, and led him off crooning over him—crooning over him!

I was that fair disgusted I drove the pack of kids out with loud shouting and ordered the middlewight back to his work with the announcement I was in mind to hop the ropes and tan his hide for the fun of it. Whew! Did you ever see a mad fight manager? Well, at such times they're the most dangerous critters alive, not even excluding a bull with a crook in his tail; and of all the maddest managers you ever saw I was the worst. Just one drop of fighting blood and— But why talk about it?

My tough break didn't end there. The next night my middleweight went on for his six rounds and in thirty seconds took one on the chin that knocked him all the way back to Pueblo. Then for myself, simply as a case of self-protection, I lit out with my lightweight for Butte, where they come easier, only hoping to scrape together enough for a meal-ticket in the bushes.

THE next year I wandered far and wide in the wilderness, hopping into Seattle and Vancouver, up to Dawson City, and then down again to Frisco and Los Angeles for them shyster four-round affairs, and all the time keeping no more than one step ahead of the poorhouse.

My lightweight was game as a pebble, but when you'd said that you'd said everything. He was one of the easy marks that starts them from down round their kneecaps. I had to pick soft things for him, or we'd both had to write Hoover for quick relief. He knew so little about the fine art of hit and get away that after every mill a big percentage of our earnings went for sticking-plaster and arnica to assemble the fragments and restore his handsome mug.

He was a target for fair; but what can a plain manager do when boys of class are as far between as Democratic Presidents and are harder to get than prohibition under the Eighteenth Commandment? Say, that lightweight and me was lucky to keep anywheres near a dining-room door. And every so often I'd pick a nail out of the ring platform, cook it red-hot in the gas-jet back in my six-by-nine, and burn another hole in my belt.

But in the fight game it's the same as in everything else. When things get so bad they can't get worse, then you may begin to pick up hope. One night in Oakland my lightweight flattened a guy with a lucky stab just as they'd put up their hands. We got headlines, and two days later I received an invite from Leland Stanford to come on and give an exhibition in the gym. We made it free, riding on the airy end of a mail-car; and before the college boys, with no competition offering, it sure looked as if my lightweight could step some.

But that didn't amount to anything one way or the other. The bit of luck I'm hinting at came along in the shape of a tall, bent-over professor, looking, with his big goggles and mournful countenance, as if he'd cop a fortune wringing his hands and crying at funerals.

He slipped into the chair beside me when my lightweight was prancing and lumbering around, thinking he was a Packey McFarland. And in order to save my eyes from the pain of the terrible display, I drew His Profess into chin music; we got chummy and I thought to amuse him by telling him of mama's boy.

He listened quietly for a minute, then pricked up his ears and started shooting questions and never stopped till he knew as much as either of us does. Then when the dismal party broke up in the gym he led me off to one side, and said as how he's certain sure mama's boy is the world-beater I at first thought him to be.

I laughed right out at him, it was that funny for a college profess to be telling me he knew a fighter and that I was not hep to a lad what had the stuff and the mettle. But that didn't faze him; oh, no, sirree! He started gabbing about "mental hazards," and talking 'ology or something such; and wound up by predicting that, if I'd only get rid of mama, the kid would keep an ambulance busy carting them from the ring to the hospital.

But I couldn't see it—not that day, anyway. No. I shook hands with the profess and bade him good-by. Let him stick to his trade and I'd stick to mine. But a week later, when my lightweight went out for keeps in a return shindy with his Oakland victim, I got to scratching my noodle and saying I might as well take a flyer on the professor's dope; for that's the only bright speck showing anywhere on the black horizon. So I dropped over to Frisco and talked old times to Nate Campbell across his bar; gave him a spiel, and came away with the wherewithal to land me in the Only Burg.

Paddy Madigan greeted me like a long-lost brother, but said as how he felt like handing me a poke on the nose, when I related what the profess had tipped me off to. Paddy just roared, and asked leave to feel of my head. I was downhearted and half-ashamed; but having started the sparring, having traveled three thousand miles on borrowed tin, I carried the fight back to him; demanded to know what kind of a sport he was, and whether or not he was a betting man and wouldn't lay his shirt and socks on one chance in a million. That got him; I'd landed the knockout on his soft spot. We started in questioning the kids on the corner next the feed and livery; and that same evening at the very first opportunity I climbed three flights of stairs and, hat in hand, called politely on Widow McGill.

WAS she glad to see me? Say, I was looking first thing how and where I'd dodge a swish of a broom or maybe a flying flatiron. Give up her boy to me, indeed? Was that all and everything I wanted? Why didn't I beg her for the rugs and the piano and all the furniture and the few dollars she had laying in the bank? I backed out with her storming away at me, when all of a sudden she let her foot slip.

Aye, pride carrying her away I suppose, she let fall that her angel-face was up on Broadway this and every night, earning his honest and profitable living tossing a toe in the Sans Souci Cabaret. That's all I wanted or waited for to hear.

Paddy Madigan and I found a table off to one side, and sat nervous, hardly hearing the hula-hula band and paying no heed to the dancing couples skimming over the bright floor. What we were on pins and needles for was sight of mama's boy. The band stopped and the trotters scattered back to their ham and eggs. A Jane, all smiles and no clothes, pranced out and skirled a Georgie Cohan song. Then the spotlight shifted over to the corner of the dancing-floor near the band, and many and tough as the fights I've been through, I felt something thump my ribs. The crowd starts clapping; but no need to tell you. It was the kiddo!

He had a slip of a partner; but my eyes were glued on mama's boy. Was he a dancer? Say, he showed me for the first time what dancing means! He had springs in every toe and a movement that would set you wild. He was there, forty ways from the jack and more! I sat there without muttering a word till he tapped his heels together high in the air and bowed himself off while the house went mad. Then I looked at Paddy Madigan and Paddy Madigan he looked at me.

"Have you still got it in your head to spoil a good dancer?" he asked me.

" He's grown two inches and is a natural bantam," I said, trying to make believe I'd never heard him.

He rose to his feet with a show of anger. "Come on out of here," he growled. "That sissy looks like he's got powder on his nose; and he ought to be carrying lilies in his hand." Then, when I kept my chair, he bent over, glowering at me. "You're not looking in a girls' school, are you, for a man to stand up and take a beating in the ring?"

I felt kind of foolish, like I was sinking in the mud of the North River. I was up against it for fair. Them three thousand miles and what I owed Nate Campbell started spinning through my head. I was sure in one desperate fix. My lightweight gone back to driving a trolley-car; all this way on another man's money to find a promising kid gone to the bowwows! Then, from clear out of nowheres, an idea flashed into my muddled noodle.

"It's not myself allows this lad is a great and unbeatable fighter," I came back at Madigan strong. "It's a college professor, and no one else, that says it; and any scallawag of a college professor has more in his upper story in a minute than you'll have in your garret in your whole lifetime, you poor fish!" With that I rose. "I'm going to see the boy myself, now."

DICK JOYCE, who'd been pensioned off the police force for decrepit old age when he was hale and strong, just touching forty-five, was well known to me as the sport-loving and wealthy proprietor of the Sans Souci Cabaret. We went back to the dressing-room together.

I caught a glimpse through the half-open door of mama's boy frumping up in front of a mirror. I started cussing that professor under my breath, but when Joyce stepped in, the lad gave two buck leaps and came out to welcome me. It pleases me yet to think of it. Ah, my hearties, you may take all your dancers, good or bad, as they come; but, one thing, you can't quench the fighting spirit in any man, dead or alive!

He'd been thinking of me all along, he said, and hoped to find me so he could go in the ring. But gripping both his hands, I held him at arm's length and looked straight into his eyes.

"Before you take one step further, answer me this, will you?" I said. "Did you clap eyes on your maw before or after taking that flop in the ring in Madigan's yard?"

He laughed sort of nervous-like, and said he, "I saw her opening the back door of the feed-store and coming out into the yard before Ted Durkin had laid one finger on me."

"You're certain sure?"

"It was mama had me scared," he answered back.

"And the spirit of fight didn't come over you, in the first place, till the big double gate was shut in your face and you thought your mama couldn't find you?"

"That's about it," he said, scraping one toe on the floor as if he was sheepish about it.

"Say, young feller," I offered him then, "I'll manage you and make you the greatest champ your class ever saw. That profess is a wise old bird. He guessed you right, and him three thousand miles away." Then I saw the kid wrinkling his brow, like he was puzzled. "Oh, don't go paying any heed to my ramblings," I said, realizing it must sound phony to him. "It's only a college chum of mine I'm thinking about."

Well, his nibs went on to wind up his dancing for the evening, and I laid my plan before my two friends. I had the boy and they had the kale. But Paddy wasn't precisely friendly when it came to the point of putting up. Neither can I say that ex-cop, Joyce, showed any signs of falling all over himself in willingness to part with any of the long green. To tell what's true, they wouldn't fall for the professor's dope; they were of one mind and emphatic in saying that when it came to matters of the ring any college professor whatsoever was the sure-thing bunk and original piece of cheese.

It looked as if I was running true to form and again on the losing end. I couldn't pitch that boy from the dancing-floor into the ring. He'd sure get his block knocked off unless he had some training and a few weeks at least to get used to the feel of the gloves on his hands. This cost tin, and it cost still more to have the kid out of reach of his doting parent. The only cash in sight was in the safe-keeping of my two tight-wad friends. I scratched my head, as I usually do when great events are threatening, and, sure enough, I tickled out a sweet fancy.

"We'll find a boy that'll give him a try-out for fair," I said. "How will that suit the pair of you?"

It was agreeable. And in order to get the boy away from his mother, Joyce let it be known that a rehearsal for the new cabaret show was called at ten the next morning. When ten came around, we were up in the thick gloom of the Osceola Club, the air still reeking with the smoke left over from the bouts the night before.

Cal Galway was a Mick from the sunny slopes of Naples. He was a hummer close to the first flight of the cocky little bantams. Without any fussing we let them go at it. Cal had the edge, I'll say that; but it wasn't an edge that any one could brag about. Mama's boy took a beating all right; but up till the very minute we stopped it he was coming back for more. The three judges, for the first time in their lives on any or all kinds of subjects, reached an agreement, without one dissenting word. The proof of that was the voluntary offer of Dick and Paddy to back me and the dancing-master to the limit.

"For a green youngster he's the best I ever clapped my eyes on," says Captain Joyce, says he.

"If there's a streak of yellow in that kid it's made of pure gold," says friend Madigan, when my little champ's head bounced off the floor and he bounced right back on his legs, rushing in like a bull.

Later that day I paid another call on Mrs. McGill. I'd perked up courage and never halted, once she opened the door, till I was in the sitting-room. There I pulled out two brand-new five-hundred-dollar bills, and dropped them, careless-like, on the mahogany. "I well know your boy's a minor, Mrs. McGill," I said. "This here is only a trifle by way of first payment to let him come under my wing."

No, sir; it didn't go. Widow McGill was a woman with a mind of her own. "Is it my boy become a pug?" she reviled me. "Ten times your five hundreds wouldn't tempt me. I have him coming along fine. He'll be dancing in a Shubert musical comedy next thing you know, and after that you'll see him a star in the movies." She noted the doubting look I wore. "If Charlie Chaplin and Doug Fairbanks has done it, why can't my son do it, too?"

There was no disputing with a woman in a frame of mind like that, and I was inclined to go, the more so when she started talking again in a manner of way that you might call threatening and dangerous to life and limb.

The long and the short of it was I had a heart-to-heart confab with the lad in Joyce's office a couple of hours later; and that same evening we lit out for the Wild and Woolly. Yes, sir; we did that, the boy acting of his own free wishes; and it makes me chuckle to think of the job left to Joyce and Madigan. They were to call on maw the next morning and inform her that the very best thing in the world was being done for her fond offspring; and that, moreover and besides, if she wanted a weekly bit to carry her along— But, as I heard by mail later, they never got that far.

WELL, sir, I hate to let my mind dwell on the year and a half that followed. Maw had christened him Reginald Mortimer McGill! He passed through the tank towns as Bat Flynn. At first all was a bed of roses. He won six prelims straight off the reel in the first round. I sent back glowing accounts to Joyce and Madigan, with a share for Mama McGill. But somehow I got to be worried.

Bat had a nervous way with him every time he climbed through the ropes. He was fidgety and excitable. That wasn't so surprising, however, particularly in a boy of class, for they're fine-strung; but it was the sudden way it came on him got me. I couldn't figger him out, nohow, but just knew he was suffering from some dire complaint.

Then out in Des Moines we bumped into a sharpshooter that lived through Bat's red-fire attack, and after two knock-downs came up, smiling, for the second spasm. It was just gameness carried him to the middle. He was wobbling, and I waited confidently for the winning one to go over. But, holy mackerel! it never came. My boy blew up for fair. Along in the fourth I picked him up from a corner, where he'd been counted out, and no matter how I talked he'd do nothing only blub and blub. He had no kick left. All he was good for was just to wilt down on his stool and ooze salty tears like a dill pickle.

We were dated up for Sacramento, and leaving him out at the training-camp I hopped over to Leland Stanford and saw the profess. He glinted at me through his goggles like a fox, and listened to my gab, wagging his wise old nut.

"Sure, it's a lead-pipe cinch," he said, or words along that way. "The boy's got the old lady on his mind. Bet you a million to a dime, he's a wonder in the gym and a dumb-bell in the ring."

"You said it, profess," I returned quickly. "If he doesn't rock them to sleep in the first charge, then he blows up like a bunch of firecrackers."

"There's nothing strange about it," he said. "Most likely you yourself are doing something every day just the way your own mother made you." Then he nodded his head. "And you do it without knowing you took the tip from her. Or maybe, once again, you're hard-fisted, and like the bloody scenes of the ring because your father was a pugnacious man, and wanted you to lick all the boys in your home town."

"Lordy, profess, but you're a wise galoot!" I handed him admiringly.

"All you've got to do with Bat Flynn," he returned, "is rid him of the influence his mother exerts over him. Have you thought up anything along that line?"

"I came all this way to find out what's wrong with him, and the medicine to use," I answered. "I haven't one thought in my head on how to cure him of this sore ailment of his."

"I've told you what's wrong, and it's up to you," he gave back. "It's a hard thing to cure, harder than an ill of the flesh; and I don't envy you one bit." Then he started in again, explaining how it all works out according to the rules and regulations of his 'ology, or whatever the blazes it is you call it.

WELL, sir, there it was. I was in the soup. If you look up the back files of the Sacramento papers, you'll see what happened to Bat Flynn.

Don't ask me anything about the months that followed. I hate to think of them; sometimes they rack my dreams. We won a few in the first stanza; but you'd never notice them in the trail of defeats we left behind as we worked ourselves East. Yes, sir, we were headed for home. I'd settled it in my mind. I'd talked to that kid till my tongue was half-paralyzed. But no good. It was always the same. Locked in the training-quarters, where maw couldn't come, he was a world's wonder. Push him into the ring, with the public around and where maw might pop up any minute, and he was the world's greatest dub. Then the remote chance of hearing a familiar voice calling out, "Reginald Mortimer," crimped his nerves, made him as a fighter worse than an old woman.

"It's no use, kid," I said, as we were hopping off the train in Chicago one evening. "We'll only stay long enough in this bailiwick to grab tickets for Broadway. I'll see that Cap Joyce gives you back your dancing job, and then I'll go down to West Street and sign up a longshoreman, who's got only cement between the ears."

I meant it, I did. Why should I worry myself a minute more? The kid had had his chance. He had it in him to whip his weight in weasels, but he couldn't stand up any more than a straw against the simple thought of his maw. I had him in tow, heading down La Salle street to the ticket-office, when I got a dig in the slats and looked round to see my old pal, Lou Houseman.

"What are you doing out here, Tim?" he said, and then giving the kid the once-over, "Any good, is he?"

"Sure thing, Lou, he's a bear."

You see, I had to stand up for him in self-respect, and besides I'm not the one to rub any one's feelings the wrong way.

What happened? Lou had a chance to put my boy on. I thought it over a second or two; but what was the use—I'm a good gambler, they tell me. And what difference did it make if I hit Broadway a week or two early or a week or two late? I took the lad out near Hammond, Indiana, to train.

We put the bag up under a maple-tree, and all the folks around used to gather and clap their hands when Bat beat it a rat-a-tat on the board. He could lick creation at that. We rigged a ring in an empty barn, and the boys came with their girls and paid us dimes to see the youngster going through his paces. He was good at that. And he used to wind up with dancing-steps that always set them wild. He'd give them everything—the shuffle and the breakdown and the old buck-and-wing. It wasn't what I wanted of him, but as we were going to part after his taking another walloping, I let him enjoy himself as he would.

WE WERE on in one of the early bouts in Tattersall's. Bat Flynn got a hand from nobody, except some of the farmer gang from Hammond that had come in, the poor boobs, expecting to see him win. They were away back in the dollar rows, and they sure did kick up some noise. A tough youngster from the Stockyards was backed strong to make a chopping-block of my man.

Dan Patten had a knock-out record as long as your arm. He was coming along fast, heading straight for the star mills, and, I thought to myself, my dancing-master is going to wind up his ring career at the end of a stiff pair of maulers.

I was sort of bored with the evening, only wishing to be started on the last lap for the Great White Lane. I paid no more than passing attention to the formal beginnings of the fray. I recall a kind of weariness when I slipped down out of the ring after the clack of the gong, and I turned rather slow, not caring to be overquick finding mama's boy gazing up at the arc lights and seeing them big as moons.

But I gathered motion and vim when I heard the crowd let out its bass yell. Holy smoke! My boy was off like his regular self! He was fighting like the whirlwind I knew his natural gait to be. He had me back right off to the morning when he shook his black curls and whanged that kid guerrilla up and down and across the ring in Paddy Madigan's yard. I gripped the edge of the ring platform in both my hands and held my breath. Was he going it, I ask you? Say, he was eating up that Stockyards Turk just as if he was nothing more than sweet apple pie!

There was no rattly nerves in sight now, I'll say to you. No, sir! He had come into his own at last. I could see that. He had picked up all the tricks and arts of the trade; he was as fast as a chicken-hawk swooping down the wind. He had everything, and to spare. And before the round was half over that crowd saw what I saw myself—that my dancing-master was in a class by himself.

But my mind went back over the long trail out to Frisco, over the last eighteen months or so, and I waited for the second, and then I waited for the third. But it was just the same. My boy never batted an eye. He was getting better, if that was possible, all the time. Just when they lifted the curtain on the fourth he put over a beauty, and down went Patten. I saw the second in the far corner getting ready to toss in the towel. Dan rested on one knee till the count reached nine; then got up only to go on the ropes from a wicked left where it did the most good. The fight was as good as won, everybody agreed, and then—I started to tear my hair.

The kid had gone wrong again. Aye, worse than that. He just dropped his arms, and stood gazing out at the throng. And Dan Patten had nothing else to do but reel over and clip the dancing-master on the chin and send his heels higher than his head.

While the count was going on I turned my face away, thoroughly disgusted and, without thinking, my gaze followed in the direction the boy had been looking. Snakes alive! Who was in sight, pushing with might and main down the jammed aisle, and trying to raise a voice above the horrible din, but Widow McGill!

I knew it all. And I didn't have to be told how hopeless the case was. I gathered my shoulders, ready to take the worst she had to send and hand her son, after the knock-out, into her arms. Suddenly the gong sounded, and the count stopped at seven. I climbed in like a machine, and lifted mama's boy up and carried him over and plunked him down on his stool.

Then there's where it was. Maw reaches the corner and stands calling for immediate delivery of her son. What was I to do? Nothing but leave it to the kid himself. And he was coming to fast, and wanting to run. He leaned over the ropes, his eyes wild, and aching to cry; and the crowd, getting hep, hollered its lungs out, kidding the poor guy. He was ready to crawl down and out, with me making no move to stop him, when off goes the gong again.

Sort of peeved, I grabbed his arm and slung him to the middle. Dan Patten is out, full of ginger, ready to get his man. There was nothing to it now. The kid was watching maw out of one eye, and his chin was going up and down, he was that scared. Zip! goes Dan's right, and down goes Bat Flynn on his hands and knees. *One, two, three!* I hear another female voice. And it's was right beside me, where maw herself has been carrying on. But this is a voice singing a different tune.

"Get up, Bat," the voice was saying. "Get up and fight for me!" *Four, five, six!* Bat Flynn turned his head and opened wide his eyes. "If you don't get up and lick him, I'll never speak to you again." *Seven, eight, nine!* Oh, boy!

My kiddo was on his feet, and going like a house afire. Man, it was wonderful! He had his heart back in its natural place, and was handling himself like a thoroughbred. He drove Dan Patten before him from post to post; he leaned on him with the grand old right and left, then bent him over with a drive in the midriff, and then sent him miles into dreamland with a snappy uppercut that went home clean as a whistle. And when the count was over he picked up the still sleeping near-fighter, and flopped him down in his corner, with the shout to his seconds, "Who have you got next?"

And as for myself, I jumped up and wound both my arms around the kid. Why? Because I knew maw was a past member; because, good woman as she was, she was down for the long count. And next I leaped down and took a slip of a girl in a fierce embrace and smacked her before all the crowd, wild with glee. Why not? Flossie'd found the secret for me. She knew more than that dunce of a professor. All of us men was just deaf, dumb and blind compared to her. I'd seen her before. She'd been hanging around out at Hammond; many a dime of hers I had in my kick. And my boy? Oh, they're all the same—he'd made sweet to her and never peeped a word.

Maw set up an awful holler, of course, but the knot was tied in the City Hall the next morning with me acting grandly the part of best man.

THE great manager felt of his Adam's apple. "I'll allow it's as dry as the Arizona desert," he said, and neatly lifted the cap off another bottle of Mrs. Breslin's home brew. "You'll be joining me?" he inquired.

"That I will," I replied. "But what about the rest of your yarn?"

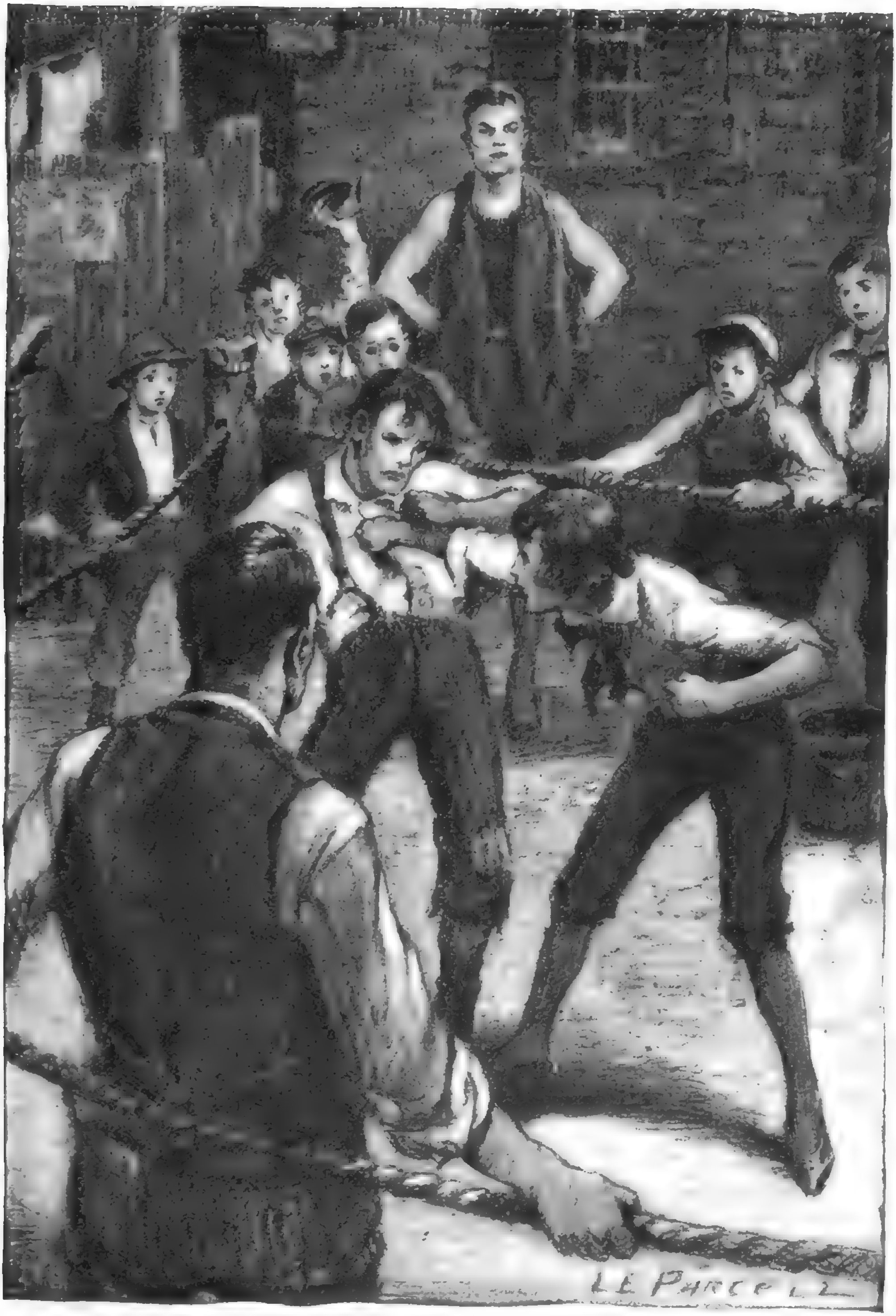
He lifted his eyes from the collar rising in the glass and fixed me with a look of scorn. "Did you never hear tell of my little champ? Did you never see him in action? Can't you or any fan call off his record from your own memory, without troubling at all, at all? Sure you can; but I'll tell the tale in short for you now:

"We put the corpse of Bat Flynn in a lead casket and sealed it up and dropped it at the dead of night to the bottom of Lake Michigan." He looked at me. "Do you get me? What kind of a champ would he be with that mile-long string of knock-outs chalked up against his record? After that my peerless little scrapper mopped up the ring with every bantam they could dig up in the whole United States, in Europe, the British Isles, Spain, China and Peru. In twelve months we split a fortune and hired J. P. Morgan to dope our income tax."

"Oh, aye, and—well, here's to your champ," I said.

"Drink hearty," he came back; and we tipped glasses to each other.

Then, just as I was smacking my lips, there was a sound down the long hall as of some one bursting in. I looked in alarm at my good host, but he was sitting back with great calm on him and a twinkle in his eye. We heard a fast scurry of feet, and then who should come rushing in but our jim dandy, Jackie Farley, the East Side Terror, who had laid the Frisco Wildcat



Mama's boy stepped around better and better. His black curls weren't even getting dusted.

low. And there was not so much as a scrape or mark on him; and he was all dressed up in smiles, but not more so than the picture of a girl who was holding him by the hand.

"What's been keeping the pair of you—Bat and Flossie?" asked Tim Breslin, laying emphasis on the names and looking straight and saucy at me.

"Why, darn you, Tim," I exclaimed, rising, "I was hep all the time."

"Like—like Kelly was," Tim shot back, rocking with laughter in his chair.

I was busy with the congratulations fitting for such an occasion, when some one else joined our merry party. Mrs. Breslin came rustling in. She looked neither at Flossie nor Tim nor me, but had eyes only for Jackie Farley. She breathed something about having waited up for him, then clasped him in her arms, and crooned: "Mama's boy! They didn't hurt you, did they, mama's boy?"

"He finished him in three rounds," I heard Flossie say proudly.

Then I felt a pluck at my sleeve, and turned to see Tim Breslin looking at me with a broad grin.

"The harder the breaks against you, the greater your luck some day," he said. "When Mrs. McGill and me got to talking it over in Chicago it wound up by her knocking me out cold. Then when the buzzing began to clear away from my brain, I hinted that as the young uns were going to hitch up—" he broke off, laughing in a sort of bashful way—"well, you know how them things is, even with a hard-boiled egg like me."

I was so elated I offered him my hand. But he turned aside, beaming good nature on his wife, and touched her gently on the arm.

"Come on, maw," he said. "Leave Reginald Mortimer be. You're manager of me, and Flossie is manager of him."

# The Vermonter Departing

By Sarah N. Cleghorn

HE DROVE alone beside his sugar bush;
His measure-pacing horse was not quite slow
Enough to let him fill his deepening eyes
With the wine-washed November afterglow.

In silence sunk, he took the windy turn
Round the gulfed woods, and past the Tories' well.
The falls of Little River in his ears
(Or in his memory!) sounded like a shell.

The mountains had been hidden. Now, near home,
He saw them: Windward, in its barren pride;
Blaze, with its sunset rocks; and Pioneer,
The cloven giant of that countryside.

Their leaflessness, their stillness and their age
He let his spirit drink. He slowed again
His ancient horse, and stayed to look his fill
All that last hour before the evening train.

# The Tale of a Triumph

## *The Author Lifts Us Out of the Prosaic Present and Plants Us in a Far-off and Strangely Romantic Age*

### By H. C. Bailey

THE king was handling his new arrows and talking law to his new chancellor. The king's fool chuckled as he drew the portraits of chancellor and king. For King Henry was squat and bulky, with bristling red hair above a coarse red face and shabby withal; but his chancellor stood stately in a brocaded robe, darkly handsome, of a look to win hearts and minds. The king stabbed his finger with an arrow, swore and sucked it, and sucking, continued to argue about what Gratian said in his Decretum. The chancellor set him right and the king flung the book at his head; the chancellor caught it, found the disputed place and set it down in front of him, saying,

"God be with you."

"What, priest, when I am wrong?"

"Even so, my lord," and the chancellor went out laughing.

"By my faith, I love that fellow," the king turned and slapped his fool on the shoulder. "And what is your work, brother?"

Bran held out his picture at arm's length. "Riddle me, riddle me ree, can you tell which the king may be?"

"Rogue," said the king with that short loud laugh of his, for the picture was so drawn that in it Thomas Becket was a king making mock of some bailiff or groom. "Am I so?" he tweaked Bran's ear. "Well, God made us all."

"Nenny, nenny, brother. You made Dan Becket. And, faith, he can deck it, until he shall wreck it."

"How now?" The big brow gathered. "What has the fool against my friend?"

"Speak good words, brother. The fool is the older friend."

"And the old friend is jealous of the new?" Henry flung an arm about him. "Bran, Bran, you are a child."

"Nenny, brother. Bran fears naught nor needs aught," he touched the king's hand.

"What, then? The man is a true man."

"Yea, yea. The man is true and the man is wise. But the violent man shall not live out half his days."

"Violent? God's body, he is the courtliest of us all. What, man; has he been harsh with my fool?"

"Na, na He is blithe to Bran; he is good. But he is a hard man, Henry."

The king laughed loud. "Fear not, brother. I am hard enough."

"Said the flint to the steel And thereof came fire."

"Oh, Bran, old Bran, you are a dreamer."

"Yea, yea. Old I am in my soul and I dream dreams. And I fear what I see in my dreams. Do you dream never, Henry?"

"I have only one life to live, brother," the king said and started up and went off with his arrows and his book of law.

BRAN went on working at another picture, a picture of a king in his crown washing the feet of beggars and in a while the chancellor came back with a sheaf of parchments. "The king is gone, friend?"

"And Thomas is come. God save us all."

"Now what has Bran against poor Thomas?" he came and stood by Bran's side and Bran looked up at him.

"You have a long nose, brother."

"I confess the nose. But it harms none but me."

"I like it not when a man has a long nose."

"You mistake me and know not why. It is not Christian, brother fool."

"Na, na, but human it is. Are you Christian, brother?"

"I trust in God."

"Then forgive your enemies."

"How now? Who is mine enemy?"

"A hit, a hit. That struck home, Thomas."

The chancellor made merry no more. "You strike shrewdly, brother."

"Then forgive poor Bran."

"By my faith, I dare not. Nay, brother, I forgive no man who is a better man than I am."

And Bran watched him keenly. "Yes, you speak from the heart," he said. "There is greatness in you, brother. I am sorry."

"This is a strange fellow." Becket laid his hand on the big head. "What do you see that I see not?"

Bran thrust forward his picture of the crowned king serving beggars. "That is for me, brother?" Becket said in a moment. "Well, I need the lesson, God knows. And what is this other?" Bran drew it away, but he laid hands on the mocking picture of king and chancellor. "Oh, rogue," he laughed. "This must to the king."

"He has had it, brother. And is gone away merry."

"Aye, and where is he gone? For here is a day's work to do."

"Three things, yea, and four, Solomon he had found that his wisdom might not know, and a fifth there is which is darker yet: the way of an eagle in the air, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, the way of a serpent on a rock and the way of a man with a maid. But who knows the way of Henry our king, cousin Solomon?"

The chancellor looked at him gravely. "I would seek it out, brother!"

"Yea, yea, if you were a fool," Bran said.

THE king was among his people, away across the river in the fields beyond the Abbey. There the guilds of Shrewsbury made holiday in honor of new rights of market and there was archery and cock-fighting and bull-baiting and quarterstaff play and joys less bloody.

In and out of the frolic went the king in his shabby, short cloak as hearty and jolly as any of them. He limped in his English, a man of many tongues, but he understood it and he had a laugh for every jest and a knowing eye for every girl and if any dared to know him and do him reverence there was a cuff and a coarse joke.

He was arm in arm with some merry wife in the circle about two dancing bears, shouting and rocking with laughter like her, when riding by came his queen with Roger Mortimer, lord of the Marches, and a splendid company. The king, who saw everything, saw her, but seemed not to see and roared to his bears. Queen Eleanor, checked to a foot's pace by the press of the crowd, would not see what she saw and rode like a statue of majesty.

"By the bones of the Conqueror this rabble needs a master," Mortimer said, but she answered nothing and he pushed on and bade his men ride down who stood in their way. So they broke through and the crowd surged and scoffed and howled and turned to its sport again.

In a while after the king drew off and, trudging across country, came to a copse where a girl stood waiting. While he was still far off she had seen him and watched, her hand shading her eyes, but when he was come she stood as though there were no life in her, very still and pale and her eyes looked beyond him.

"Good child," said he and he laughed and took her and kissed her.

She was at his will, she did not move in his arms. When he let her go she turned from him, her hand at her throat. He grasped it and with it made her look at him. "Ah, my lord!" she cried.

"What now, Izan?" he said gently.

"That is my soul cries out in me."

"And is it not mine?"

"I do not know what I am, no, nor who I am now. I am here with you."

"Why, child, does that make you sad?"

"I can not tell. You bid me come and I must come. You know and I know no more."

"Dear woman," he said and caressed her. She was small, this Izan de Bocland, and frail, her body lost in her flowing blue gown, her hands and feet like a child's, but from her delicate keen face looked forth a life eager and brave.

"What do you need of me, my lord?"

"To feel you with me, child." He drew her little arm through his and since he could never be still, walked to and fro with her while he made her talk of what she had done all day, of all her tasks and her ways and her thoughts. A tale of the smallest things, of the simple life of a poor knight's daughter; but her talk was as if she showed him herself and gave it. And he listened while the darkness gathered about them till she fell silent and looked at him, her eyes dark as the night sky, but her face was white. "Dear life," he said and kissed her. "Come to me again, come."

"My lord," she said like a prayer and watched him hurrying into the dark.

TO THE castle at Shrewsbury the queen had come long before him and Roger Mortimer led her to her bower and there in due form was grateful for the honor she had done him in visiting his poor lands and house.

She gave him her hand to kiss. "We have had good entertainment, my lord," and turned to her women and bade them bring the prince.

"You are gracious, madam. I can not pardon myself that you were troubled by the herds of these brute common folk."

"It is no blame of yours, Roger."

"By my honor, if I were lord in Shrewsbury it would be a sad town on the morrow." He looked at her keenly. "But the way is now to let the base rogues have their will. God's blood, it can not last nor shall not!"

"Is that a threat, my lord?"

"You are my queen. None knows it as I know it, Lady Eleanor." He came nearer, looking down into her eyes; he was a man very sure of his magnificence, not without cause, for he was made in the grand style, large and handsome, with the fair bright color of the old Norse race before it was made Norman in France. He took her hand. "My queen," he said again.

And the women brought in her little Prince Henry, who came in a rage scolding and beating them. "Here is one who is made to rule, Roger," she smiled.

"Aye, there is royalty in him," the man said and, seeing there was no more to be done with her then, made a graceful departure.

The king was late, the king was in a hurry and his court, hungry with long waiting, found him sitting down to supper before they were in their places, a distressing thing, but not new. On his own high table a third cup was set and he looked at it and from it to the queen. "I have bidden Roger Mortimer," she said.

"A bold girl," he said with his loud, short laugh. "But she says come and his mightiness comes not. Cry aloud, for he is a god."

"You are merry, my lord. God knows why. The man has been my host to-day. Now I am his."

"What shall be done to the man whom the queen delights to honor? Nay, what shall not be done?"

"Aye, mock me," she said fiercely. "Be sure that I honor no man base-born, no, nor of base likings, my lord."

"See where he comes! Do I bid the trumpets sound, Eleanor?"

And Roger came in dignity. He made the speech that was due, something about asking pardon, something about the honor done him.

"God's body, man, you should be a herald," the king cried. "Sit down to your meat or you will have us gone while you are empty."

Roger made the best of it. He risked a glance at the queen and sat down and began to talk easily of horse and hawk and hound. The king would not have it. Eating, as his wont was, like a man who has but one minute to spare for the hunger of a day, he engaged Roger with great affairs. The right order of the realm, how it stood with the barons, how the commons fared, what was the need of the time, on all this the king urgently sought Roger's thoughts. No doubt that he was jeering at the man; he used no pains to hide it. But Roger came off well enough, making grave earnest of the business, like one conscious of ill-bred folly, but ruling it out of his thought.

"This is the sum of my mind," he said at last. "The common folk must have a master."

"Solomon Mortimer!" The king pushed back his chair. "My father chastised them with whips, but I will chastise them with scorpions, said Solomon." He turned and kicked at Bran. "Eh, fool, was it Solomon?"

Bran was huddled on his stool in a quest for marrow. "Peace, brother, peace," he mumbled. "Let me suck me my bone."

"God's body, it is well said. There is the king's part, Solomon: give the folk peace to suck their bones." He started up.

"Yet there is some sooth in you. The land must have a master. Go find him, Solomon." He flung out his hand to the queen. "Come with us, my fool," he called over his shoulder.

"Oh, Henry, my brother," Bran groaned at them, "is this your peace?"

When they came to his room of audience, the king thrust a kiss on her and cried "Good dreams, Eleanor," and fell into a chair and drew parchments to him.

She stood over him. "Let the fool be gone, Henry."

"God's my judge, I thought we were rid of him," the king laughed, and feigned to look round the room. "Aye, aye, all is well. Sleep sound, my woman. We have done with Roger Mortimer."

She stamped her foot. "You need no fool who fool it so well. Out, Bran. I have talk for your master."

"Heigho, come and go, hit me high, hit me low. Quoth I, Dan Shuttlecock." Bran lounged away.

But the king tripped him up. "Lie down, brother. Nay, good wife, if you must talk, none so fit to hear as brother Bran."

Bran had made an elaborate stagger and a ludicrous fall, but the queen was in no temper to laugh. And from the ground he groaned. "Eleanor, Eleanor, hear poor Bran: Queen is queen but man is man, woman may win what no queen can."

The king threw a strange look at him. The queen cried out: "Why, then, let all the world hear. I say you use me vilely, Henry—Henry the Angevin."

"My gentle girl of Poitou," the king laughed.

"It was a king that I came to wed. A king you are called, but no king indeed. A king of the greasy commons, a king of villains and serfs. Not a baron in your land, no knight nor man nobly born but spits upon you."

"Hear the words of Solomon Mortimer."

"You, you have no friends but churls. You live among the hovels. You choose out men base-born, no man's sons, to honor, like this son of earth that is your new chancellor, like the fool who lies there. These are our king's men. Death of God, what a king! I am weary of it, Master Angevin."

And here came in the chancellor laden with his parchment sheaves. He stopped and bowed and with something of a sigh was going out again.

"Nay, nay, it is naught, Thomas. Have you done, sweet wife?" the king laughed.

"Look to yourself," she cried. "Aye, there you are well set betwixt your clerk and your fool," and she stormed out.

The chancellor sat himself down and smoothly began to talk of scutage.

"Oh, Henry, brother Henry, here is no right but double wrong," Bran groaned.

The king started round. "You have your word, too? What is your word, wise man?"

"Both be wrong and neither is right, O Henry, my brother, God give you light!"

The red brow bent. "What wrong have I wrought, fool?"

Bran dragged himself along the floor to the king's feet. "Who is your child's mother, she is like none other."

"Bran, Bran," the king said, and his head lay on the big head. "What a man gives, that he is given."

"Yea, brother, yea."

"Aye, but he can give only what will be taken," And Bran bowed his head on the king's knees.

IT WAS the next day and the queen was walking on the walls when Roger Mortimer came up behind her. How should their tale be told now? Nor he nor she could think that in what they did there was wrong: both were well assured that to them intolerable wrong was done. Yet so the world goes that you will despise them heart and head. And they well believed that they struck for the right and at God's command. How could such people and such deeds now be?

That Queen Eleanor was a woman shrewd and of a great will none deny. I hold it a vulgar error to write Roger Mortimer off as a ballad-monger's villain. He had something more in him than passion. Or, if you please, less. But the tale must hurry or it is not true.

The Queen stood there looking out over the vale of Severn and Roger Mortimer came beside her.

"You watch like a princess in prison, my queen."

She did not turn nor speak; she stood like a woman of stone.

"Where is the king, madam?"

Then she flung round upon him. "Death of God, do you tempt me?" she cried.

"Not I, by the rood. I bid you think of your honor."

She laughed. "A word, man, a word. What honor have I left? Naught I am and less than naught."

"You have said, and it is your shame that you say."

"You are a bold man, Roger Mortimer."

"And when will you be bold, madam?"

Her hand clutched at the battlements till the knuckles stood out. She commanded herself. "Speak, man, speak," she said in a low voice. "What is in your heart?"

"I said, where is the king, madam?"

"Blood of God, man, I know not nor care. Chaffering with this scullion or that."

"It is like enough. But in a little while he will be with a scullion's wench. He has marked one down as your stoat marks down a coney. Each creature does after his kind, Eleanor, and such is he. He spends himself for a broken man's daughter and day by day seeks her out. A blowsy milkmaid has him. And you—nay, what are you?"

"Are you true, Roger?"

"I lie to no man nor for no woman's sake. Are you true, Eleanor?"

"You dare—" she turned on him.

"Aye, madam, I dare all for your honor. And what dare you? By the bones of the Conqueror we have borne enough from this scullions' king. There is no lord in all the land that is not wronged by him. And you that made him great most foully wronged. I say it is the hour to strike.

"Show me this girl."

He laughed. "Girl and man too. Coney and stoat. I swear to you I will snatch them up and bear them off to my hold in Bridgenorth if you will give me your banner to bear. Come! All the marches will rise for me and if we strike under the queen's banner the lords of the north will join hands with us and we will make an end of this king of scullions and Eleanor shall be the lady of England. Do you dare?"

She grasped at his hand. "Fail not you."

"Faith of God, not I! I shall have him caged this night."

She laughed. "And I—I shall speak with him in his cage."

"Ride out before the sun sets. He will be hungry for you."

ON THAT morning, Izan, having set in order her dairy and her little household, left her father in a chair in the sun with arrows to plume and his old hound at his knee and wandered away to the copse that was her shrine. She had no thought of her lord's coming then, for she had schooled herself to count upon nothing from him. Twice he would come and seem to live for it, then fail her thrice; but she loved to be in the place and remember, poor child, and dream.

But on this morning the king broke loose from his chancellor's burden of tasks betimes and left that shrewd man wondering. "God guide you, brother, you walk like a man in his sleep," said Bran, making way for him on the stair.

"Say like one who walks in the dark, good friend," Becket said. "Can you give me light?"

But Bran made a miserable face and shook his head and went on groping.

So on this morning the king came to Izan where she sat in the shadow of the hazels. She started as she saw him and the cowslips fell from her lap. She stood and clasped her hands, her eyes large and dark in a white face. He rushed upon her, the short, burly man, red and laughing, and she was lost in his arms. But then he kissed her gently enough and held her away to look at her. "Why, child, what is it?"

"I do not know, I do not know," she trembled. "It is strange and terrible."

"There is fear in you. God's body, Izan, you must not fear."

"There is no fear," she said quietly. "But I—I can not see."

"Make me welcome, my heart."

"Ah, welcome, welcome," she put her little hands on his breast, "if it is well for you."

"Child," he kissed her hands, "you are sweet life in my veins."

"You are all power, you charge upon me and carry me off and I know nothing but you. I am to serve you, my lord."

"I come to you, I need you, I seek you like clean air, like freedom to a man who

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has broke prison. You are sun and wind and running water and flowers."

"My lord, my lord and my king," she breathed.

And then out of the copse men-at-arms broke upon them. The king was borne down before he could strike and they fell on him and bound him. He shouted and the woods rang to it and they filled his mouth with a cloth. They tied him on his horse and rode away with him and Izan was flung across their captain's saddle-bow.

You may guess how the blood pumped in that bull neck, how he gnawed at the gag and foamed and set his muscles against the creaking cords till his doublet was wet from bleeding flesh. The men who had mocked began to look at him with something like fear. "There is a devil in that one. God save us, they are the devil's own seed, those Angevins. Nay, but no man can live in such a madness as that. What if he die upon our hands?" So they talked and Henry heard nothing, knew nothing but his own passion.

When he rode out from Shrewsbury in the morning there was one who marked him far off beyond the river, one who saw the queen with Roger Mortimer on the walls; Bran, his fool, and of all that he saw Bran liked nothing. So in a while, groaning, he saddled his mule. "Into the dark, Vergil," quoth he, "into the dark. Naught in the dark but ghosts I see, O Lady St. Mary, they frighten me; from ghosts of the past I might win free, but I quail at the ghosts of what is to be. Nenny, nenny, poor Bran is a fool. There is no past nor time to come. Now is all. What hath been is naught and hath no power over what shall come, if what now is is wisely done and well. That is the faith for man. Now is all, O Bran, my brother. But you are no man. You have no life. You are a dreamer and a dream. You are a word in the air, you are a thought in the mind, you are a hope in the heart. You come and go and naught is done. Na, Na, God have mercy, brother, but what should I do, I? If I could make the man to my pleasure, naught should fall him but grief beyond measure. What can I give him with all my care but a burden all too heavy to bear? Tell him his wife hates him for what is best in him, hath a mind to wrong him for what he does right, bid him cherish her who will have no cherishing—oh, Bran, work for a fool."

But he rode on. He had marked well the way the king went, and not that day first. He guessed, I suppose, to what it led. He rode easily, his reins on the mule's neck, having no purpose to come on the king unawares or spy. And so while he was still far off the copse he saw that company of men-at-arms sweep across a hillside, riding south, and the king among them, bound. They were blue upon yellow, the colors of Mortimer's band of Flemish spears.

He turned and the mule Vergil felt whip and heel.

THOMAS BECKET, the chancellor, working on the roll of the new sheriffs with clerks busy all about him, was startled by a red and breathless fool. "Why, goodman Bran, what hounds have hunted you?"

"Hark in your ear, brother," Bran gasped.

"Get you gone, children. I hear confession," and as the clerks fled Becket came to him. "Now, man, what is the marrow of it?"

"The king is taken, brother," Bran said and steadied himself on Becket's arm. "I saw him among Roger Mortimer's Flemings. Bound he was and they rode southward. He is an hour away."

Becket put him off and he swayed to the window and leaned upon the sill, breathing deep. Becket clapped his hands and the clerks scurried in again. "Walter, go you to Sir Richard de Lucy. I greet him and it is the king's need that he sound to horse. Swift, man. Antony to Sir Roger and bid him muster every spear, and his trustiest squire must ride hard to Ludlow to my Lord of Leicester: the king's good greeting to him and the word is that his power come swift to Bridgenorth. My horse at the gate, Francis. Bid Peter bring me my harness." He clapped his hand on Bran's shoulder. "Courage, brother. This wolf hath long been marked and all is ready for his hunting. We have a pack to lay on Master Mortimer that shall pull him down in the first gallop."

Bran turned, "God have mercy, brother; a man might say you were glad of your lord's peril."

"Say not you so. He is dearer to me than brother. I know our Roger a weak man in grain. He will dare, but not do. The king shall live out his days for Roger.

God is my trust, I know he shall be safe. But Roger hath troubled the land too long. Now may we strike and strike home."

"Yea, yea. It is a wise Thomas. Swift it thinks and clear. Yet to the heart of things it sees not."

"What is the heart, then?"

"See where she goes, madam queen." He pointed out to the courtyard, where Eleanor stood with a squire of her household cloaked for the saddle.

"God's body, she would ride to Bridgenorth," Becket cried.

"You have said, brother. There is the sad heart of all."

Becket leaned from the window and shouted: "Warders, ho warders! Down portcullis!" From the gate-tower an arm was raised in answer. Slowly the iron bars slid down into the open archway and clashed upon the stones.

Becket turned and cast off his gown and went into the inner room where his squires waited with helmet and coat of mail. So, clad like a knight, he went down to the courtyard. The queen was in the saddle. "Death of God, sirrah, what folly is this?" she cried. "When was your clerkship dubbed knight? Who made you lord of our castle?"

"Lady Eleanor, none born of woman rides out of Shrewsbury this day but by the king's own order."

"I go riding, rogue."

"It can not be. You go no whither, lady."

"You—you are to hold me at your will?"

"I dare not risk you, lady. Here are you safe. Without these walls you go upon you know not what. There be evil men abroad."

"Fie, you prate like the coward clerk you are. Where is your king, then?"

"Nay, if the queen knows not, who am I to know? This only I know, that I do his will. When the king comes again let him judge if I have done you wrong."

She cried out an oath at him. "Rogue, rogue, you threaten me?"

"With what, then?" And she was silent glaring at him. He bowed to her. "I go upon the king's business, lady," and he strode away.

THE castle of Bridgenorth stood on a cliff above Severn. When they came there, the king and Izan bound still, and he still gagged, were flung into a cell beneath the gate-tower and in the dark he heard her whisper to him and ask that he would forgive her, and he dragged himself to her feet and lay touching her. But not long were they left so. When Roger Mortimer heard of their coming he made much of the captain of the Flemings, Baldwin of Ghent, promising him great things still to be won, and set a fresh watch on his towers and sent out a party on the Shrewsbury road to bring the queen. Then to his great chamber in the northern tower he went and called for wine and his prisoners.

They could but stumble and shuffle, so closely were they bound, and Roger laughed as he heard them coming. When they stood before him, dirty and torn and helpless, he fed his eyes on them and drank a cup of wine and "By the bones of the Conqueror, now you look what you are, Henry, a slave king of slaves," he said and he laughed again. "And you, wench, fit mire for him to wallow in, how like you your lover now?" But Izan would not answer and the king could not and this disappointed him. "Prick the cat with your dagger, Osbert, and let us hear her sweet voice. Tell us your love story, sweet." So one of the men-at-arms put his dagger-point into her bosom, but she neither flinched nor cried and he plucked it away in a hurry.

"My lord, she would fall on it!"

"Nay, nay, not so easy a death, dear heart. Nor so soon. Pluck the cloth out of his foul mouth. I would hear his royal speech."

Free of the gag, the king looked round the room; there were four men-at-arms guarding him, and he laughed. "Give you good night," said he. Izan stole one glance at him and shrank away behind him and leaned by the window, her bound hands at the wound in her breast.

"God's blood, the Angevin shows sport," Roger cried and drank again.

"To a merry meeting in hell! Drink it down, Roger. We shall all be there soon enough."

"You are something nearer than I, Henry."

"Yes, faith. By an hour. To-day for me, to-morrow for you, Roger. How many be here will see the sun o' Sunday?"

"Care not you for that. You have——"

"God's body, not I. It will be a merry

onfall in Bridgenorth. But that is your share. I shall lie warm with the devil."

"By my father's soul, the fool threatens!" Roger laughed loud.

"Who, I? Good Roger, where are your wits? I am sped. So are we all. Never a king was done to death but a thousand die for his killing. The wolf hath the sheep and the hounds are upon the wolf."

"Angevin!" Roger cried, for at last he saw his men's faces. "Your craft serves you not now. Out, fellows, out. Leave me alone with them."

"The brave Roger!" the king laughed. "Alone with a bound man and a woman bound. O gallant knight."

"Aye, fool it to the last, Henry. There is nothing left you but your tongue. Now hear you me. Not at my will only you lie bound, but for the lady your queen. She shall have her way with you ere you go to your grave. She comes to me this night and she shall judge you and your leman there and the fame of it shall go through all Christianity how you played her false with a wench from the byre and were taken with her. We will give you to shame and you shall be all men's jest in your death. And——"

Izan was by the window and as he spoke she reeled as though she would faint and lay there upon the sill. Once she turned and looked at the king. Then she flung herself forward and was gone.

Roger ran to the window. She lay a little huddled heap on the rock a hundred feet below and lay still.

But the king did not look. The king bent his head and spoke softly in Latin: "Into thy hands, O Lord. Christ Jesus, receive her soul and St. Mary the Mother, comfort her!"

There was no blood in Roger's face. "The wench is dead," he said and he stared at the king.

"Nay, good Roger, she lives," the king smiled and went on talking Latin: "O God Almighty, forgive not this man's sin, but give him according to his deeds and let thine angels persecute him forever."

"What say you?" Roger stammered.

"Now nay, good Roger, it is you to say. You are the speaker, are not you? Say on. Now a new tale is to make for the old tale has gone awry."

"I hold you still."

"Yea, O wise man. You hold your king bound. And none but your king. What tale is now to tell?"

"By the bones of the Conqueror it were well told if you lay there with her. That would glad your queen's heart, Henry."

The king laughed. "She tarries, good Roger, she tarries. Women are wayward. What if she comes not? Look and see. What if she hath mocked our Roger?"

"God's blood, you shall not mock me," Roger cried and drew his sword and rushed at him. The king flung up his bound arms to meet the blow. He turned it, not without blood, but as it fell it sheared through the cords and the straining arms sprang apart. Then the king fell upon him within the long sword's sweep and cast his arms about him and bore him back into the window embrasure and flung his weight upon him and bent him backward across the sill and fear took hold of him and he shouted shrill in his fear. But now the king's body held his body and the king's broad hands were at his throat and his head went backward and out and his strength passed and he moaned and the king thrust him down and leaned out, watching him roll in the air.

INTO the room breathless broke Baldwin of Ghent crying, "My lord, my lord."

The king turned smiling and sat himself down and began to tear the sleeves of his shirt to bind his arms.

"In the fiend's name, where is my lord Roger?"

"Well spoken, friend," the king laughed. "Look and see." So Baldwin ran to the window. "See where he is gone. And see who comes." And Baldwin rumbled to himself in Flemish.

"Is this your work, my master?" he turned threatening, his hand on his sword.

The king sprang up. "God's body, fellow, that well you know. It is his work who lies there. The fool who must needs be villain too. But these be my men who come upon you."

And while he spoke there ran in a man spattered with mud and horse's foam. "My lord—Baldwin—Baldwin, it is the king's banner they bear. I have seen it and de Lucy's and there is another company afar."

"There is your answer, rogues."

"You we hold still," Baldwin growled.

"At cost of your lives."

"You must be our ransom, my lord. This is the end of it," the Fleming shrugged.

"No ransom I. Out, dog, and open your gates. Or soon or late you hang."

The Fleming looked again at the power that was closing upon the castle, looked long and fled.

So when the trumpets sounded the gates were already open and Baldwin of Ghent was gone. To the room in the tower Becket came and found the king on his knees.

When he made an end of his prayer he started up and "Thomas, my friend," he took the man and kissed him. "Swift and sure are you."

"My most dear lord. I thank God this night. But it is not I that saved you; it is Bran the fool. He saw you taken. He brought me news."

"Aye, aye, true brother Bran," the king laughed.

"But how has it chanced, my lord?"

"Look from the window."

"That thing was Roger," the chancellor said coldly. "But another lies there, my lord."

"By my folly and to my shame she lies dead. This was a saint, Thomas, and like a saint I will honor her, who knew not how to honor her in life. I am a desolate man. Hear the tale, friend," and he told it.

Becket crossed himself. "St. Mary crown her," he said. "She was holy." And then he turned away and plucked at his chin.

"What is in your mind, man?"

Becket's face set like stone but his eyes glittered. "My lord, I have no will to speak. But just it is and right you know all. This is true that the knave Roger said. The queen was to ride here to meet him this night. We stayed her already in the saddle and hardly stayed her."

"God's body, that viper made the plot!"

"I say not that, my lord. Judge you."

"False she is and was ever false. Her lean hands are wet with Izan's blood. And I—I—" he gnawed at his fingers.

"The king is just," Becket said. "Let justice be done."

"Doubt me not," the king started up. "To horse, to horse!"

So in Bridgenorth to hold the castle de Lucy was left and the king stormed back to Shrewsbury.

YOU see him again in that room where the story began, Becket standing before him, grave and austere, Bran at his feet fondling him. "My brother, my brother, there are wounds on you."

"The fox snaps when you break him. It is nothing. Where is my true queen, Bran?"

"Nay, brother, I know not. The best of all is you are safe. Oh, give God thanks and be kind."

"Fool, fool," the king put a hand on the big head. "You would cry heaven in hell. Bid her come, my lord."

"O Henry, my brother, speak peace, peace. There is no right in vengeance. You have made children, the woman and you. The past is dead. You are still to live and peace wins all."

"My fool," the king said gently. "Aye, the past is dead. Speak no more."

"Oh, my brother, my brother," Bran groaned.

The queen swept in and stood silent.

"You gave me no welcome, madam?"

"I give you no welcome," she said. "Your fool was there to welcome you."

"You ask no pardon?"

And she laughed.

"You have chosen. Be it so. I have no more honor for you and I will not live with you; but free I may not trust you. You are held in ward, madam."

"I am your queen," she cried.

"You are—" he stopped a moment—"my prisoner. Go."

"I claim my children, Henry."

He looked at her heavily. "Yes. My children are yours."

She laughed again and swept out.

The king lay back with his head fallen on his breast. "Let me alone, good friends, let me alone." Bran kissed his hand and Bran's tears were wet on it. As they went out he fell on his knees and they heard him pray.

On the dark stair Bran reeled and Becket stayed him: "Why, man; courage. He hath dealt with her wisely and well."

"Yea, a hard man are you," Bran said.

"This is not I. But this is just, this is merciful. For the king is more than all."

"Na, na, na, God's peace is more than all," Bran cried. "Oh, wise man Thomas, what peace shall he see in all his days?"

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**Bill:** "Miss Norris—she's an actress—dressed up as a ghost and played the fool a bit. And poor Mark was frightened out of his life."

**Antony:** "How did Miss Norris appear suddenly over five hundred yards of bare park?"

# The Red House Murder

*An Unusual Mystery Novel with a Detective New to Fiction. Was the Killing an Accident and Did Mark Lose His Head and Run Away?*

## By A. A. Milne

*Author of "Once On a Time," "Mr. Pim Passes By," etc.*

Illustrations by George Giguère

ANTONY GILLINGHAM, thirty, cool and alert, was not the sort of man to be defeated in any enterprise he undertook—even the solution of a murder mystery; he might be baffled for a time, but his was the determination that carries one to success. He was the sort of man who never took wages the first month, but if he satisfied his employer he took double pay the second, and he had never failed to satisfy.

It was this stick-to-it type of young man—not a professional detective, but a layman with a wide-awake mind—who happened in upon an unusual scene at the Red House, the home of Mark Ablett. As Antony entered the hall, he found a man banging at a locked door and shouting, "Open the door, I say, open the door." The man was Matthew Cayley, the long-suffering cousin and protégé of the vain, overbearing Mark Ablett.

"Something's happened," said Cayley, looking up at Antony. "I heard a shot. The door is locked. We must break it in."

"So much easier to break in a window,"

said Antony, smiling. He looked very cool and collected as he leaned upon his stick.

They ran around the house, looked in at a window and saw the body of a man lying on the floor. Then they burst in the window and entered.

"Who is it?" asked Antony as he looked at the man who had been shot between the eyes.

"Robert Ablett."

"Oh," said Antony, "I thought his name was Mark."

"Yes, Mark Ablett lives here. Robert is his brother. I was afraid it was Mark."

Antony examined the door, found that it was locked and that the key was gone.

"He might have shot himself," mumbled Cayley.

"Yes, but he didn't; or if he did, somebody was in the room at the time and that somebody isn't here now. And that somebody took the pistol away with him."

THE tragedy had taken place while Mark was entertaining a house-party; the guests at the time were playing golf. At breakfast that morning Mark had announced that he expected a visit that afternoon—the first in fifteen years—from his brother, Robert, who lived in Australia. It was plain that Mark was not pleased at the prospect of the visit. Among the house-party guests was Bill Beverley, a friend of Gillinghams; and it was in coming to see Bill that Antony found a mystery to solve. At the police investigation not much more was brought out than that soon after Robert had arrived loud talking, then shots, were heard in the "office" where the body was found; that a man had been killed and that a man was missing. To Antony there was much more in the case. For instance:

Why was the door to the room locked *after* Robert was killed?

Why did Cayley run all the way around the house to reach the office windows when there was a shorter way through the house?

Was it to give Mark time in which to escape?

The first thing Cayley had said in finding the body was "Thank God! I was afraid it was Mark."

Why should he want to give Mark time to get away?

And why run if he did want to give him time?

Continuing his investigation, Antony went out of the house again to the lawns at the back, and sat down on a bench in view of the office windows.

"Now then," he said, "let's go through Cayley's mind carefully, and see what we get."

Cayley had been in the hall when Robert was shown into the office. The servant goes off to look for Mark, and Cayley goes on with his book. Mark comes down the stairs, warns Cayley to stand by in case he is wanted, and goes to meet his brother. What does Cayley expect? Possibly that he won't be wanted at all; possibly that his advice may be wanted—in the matter, say, of paying Robert's debts, or getting him a passage back to Australia; possibly that his physical assistance may be wanted to get an obstreperous Robert out of the house. Well, he sits there for a moment, and then goes into the library. Why not? He is still within reach, if wanted. Suddenly he hears a pistol-shot. A pistol-shot is the last noise you expect to hear in a country house; very natural, then, that for the moment he would hardly realize what it was. He listens and hears nothing more. Perhaps it wasn't a pistol-shot after all. After a moment or two he goes to the library door again. The profound silence makes him uneasy now. *Was* it a pistol-shot? Absurd! Still—no harm in going into the office on some excuse, just to reassure himself. So he tries the door—and finds it locked!

What are his emotions now? Alarm, uncertainty. Something is happening. Incredible though it seems, it must have been a pistol-shot. He is banging at the door and calling out to Mark, and there is no answer. Alarm—yes. But alarm for whose safety? Mark's, obviously. Robert is a stranger; Mark is an intimate friend. Robert has written a letter received that morning, the letter of a man in a dangerous temper. Robert is the tough customer; Mark the highly civilized gentleman. If there has been a quarrel, it is Robert who has shot Mark. He bangs at the door again.

Of course to Antony, coming suddenly upon this scene, Cayley's conduct had seemed rather absurd, but then, just for the moment, Cayley had lost his head. Anybody else might have done the same. But as soon as Antony suggested trying the windows Cayley saw that that was the obvious thing to do. So he leads the way to the windows—the longest way.

Why? To give the murderer time to escape? If he had thought then that Mark was the murderer, perhaps yes. But he thinks that Robert is the murderer. If he is not hiding anything, he *must* think so. Indeed he says so, when he sees the body. "I was afraid it was Mark," he says, when he finds that it is Robert who is killed. No reason, then, for wishing to gain time. On the contrary, every instinct would urge him to get into the room as quickly as possible and seize the wicked Robert. Yet he goes the longest way round. Why? And then why *run?*

"That's the question," said Antony to himself, as he filled his pipe, "and bless me if I know the answer.

He laughed suddenly and lit his pipe.

"I was wanting a new profession," he thought, "and now I've found it. Antony Gillingham, private detective. I shall begin to-day."

Whatever Antony Gillingham's other qualifications for his new profession, he had at any rate a brain which worked clearly and quickly. And this clear brain of his had already told him that he was the only person in the house at that moment who was unhandicapped in the search for truth. The inspector had arrived in it to find a man dead and a man missing. It was extremely probable, no doubt, that the missing man had shot the dead man. But it was more than extremely probable, it was almost certain, that the inspector would start with the idea that this extremely probable solution was the one true solution, and that, in consequence, he would be less disposed to consider without prejudice any other solution.

It would have greatly interested Antony to know that, just at the time when he was feeling rather superior to the prejudiced inspector, the inspector himself was letting his mind dwell lovingly upon the possibilities in connection with Mr. Gillingham. Was it only a coincidence that Mr. Gillingham had turned up just when he did? And Mr. Beverley's curious answers when asked for some account of his friend. An assistant in a tobacconist's, a waiter! An odd man, Mr. Gillingham, evidently. It might be as well to keep an eye on him.

THE guests had said good-by to Cayley, according to their different manner. The major, gruff and simple: "If you want me, command me. Anything I can do. Good-by." Betty, silently sympathetic, with everything in her large eyes which she was too much overawed to tell; Mrs. Calladine, protesting that she did not know what to say, but apparently finding plenty; and Miss Norris, crowding so much into one despairing gesture that Cayley's unvarying "Thank you very much" might have been taken this time as gratitude for an artistic entertainment.

Bill had seen them into the car, had taken his own farewells (with a special squeeze of the hand for Betty) and had wandered out to join Antony on his garden seat.

"Well, this is a queer mess," said Bill as he sat down.

"Very queer, William."

"And you actually walked right into it?"

"Right into it," said Antony.

"Then you're the man I want. There are all sorts of rumors and mysteries about, and that inspector fellow simply wouldn't keep to the point when I wanted to ask him about the murder, or whatever it is, but kept asking me questions about where I'd met you first, and all sorts of dull things like that. Now, what really happened?"

Antony told him as concisely as he could all that he had already told the inspector, Bill interrupting him here and there with appropriate "Good Lords" and whistles.

"I say, it's a fine business, isn't it? Where do I come in, exactly?"

"How do you mean?"

"Well, everybody else is bundled off except me, and I get put through it by that inspector as if I knew all about it—what's the idea?"

Antony smiled at him.

"Well, there's nothing to worry about, you know. Naturally Birch wanted to see one of you so as to know what you'd all been doing all day. And Cayley was nice enough to think that you'd be company for me, as I knew you already. And—well, that's all."

"You're staying here, in the house?" said Bill eagerly. "Good man. That's splendid."

"It reconciles you to the departure of—

some of the others?" asked Antony gravely.

Bill blushed.

"Oh, well, I shall see her again next week, anyway," he murmured.

"I congratulate you. I liked her looks. A nice comfortable sort of woman——"

"You fool, that's her mother."

"Oh, I beg your pardon. But anyhow, Bill, I want you more than she does just now. So try and put up with me."

"I say, do you really?" said Bill, rather flattered. He had a great admiration for Antony, and was very proud to be liked by him.

"Yes. You see, things are going to happen here soon."

"Inquests and that sort of thing?"

"Well, perhaps something before that. Hullo, here comes Cayley."

CAYLEY was walking across the lawn toward them, a big, heavy-shouldered man, with one of those strong, clean-shaven, ugly faces which can never quite be called plain.

"Bad luck for Cayley," said Bill. "Ought I to tell him how sorry I am and all that sort of thing? It seems so inadequate."

"I shouldn't bother," said Antony.

Cayley nodded as he came to them and stood there for a moment.

"We can make room for you," said Bill, getting up.

"Oh, don't bother, thanks. I just came to say," he went on to Antony, "that naturally they've rather lost their heads in the kitchen, and dinner won't be till half-past eight. Do just as you like about dressing, of course. What about your luggage?"

"I thought Bill and I would walk over to the inn directly and see about it."

"You can have the car as soon as it comes back from the station."

"It's very good of you, but I shall have to go over myself anyhow, to pack up and pay my bill. Besides, it's a good evening for a walk. If you wouldn't mind it, Bill?"

"I should love it."

"Well, then, if you leave the bag there, I'll send the car round for it later."

"Thanks very much."

Having said what he wanted to say, Cayley remained there a little awkwardly, as if not sure whether to go or to stay. Antony wondered whether he wanted to talk about the afternoon's happenings, or whether it was the one subject he wished to avoid. To break the silence he asked carelessly if the inspector had gone.

Cayley nodded. Then he said abruptly: "He's getting a warrant for Mark's arrest."

Bill made a suitably sympathetic noise, and Antony said with a shrug of the shoulders: "Well, he was bound to do that, wasn't he? It doesn't follow that—well, it doesn't mean anything. They naturally want to get hold of your cousin, innocent or guilty."

"Which do you think he is, Mr. Gillingham?" said Cayley, looking at him steadily.

"Mark? It's absurd," said Bill impetuously.

"Bill's loyal, you see, Mr. Cayley."

"And you owe no loyalty to any one concerned?"

"Exactly. So perhaps I might be too frank."

Bill had dropped down on the grass, and Cayley took his place on the seat, and sat there heavily, his elbows on his knees, his chin on his hands, gazing at the ground.

"I want you to be quite frank," he said at last. "Naturally I am prejudiced where Mark is concerned. So I want to know how my suggestion strikes you—who have no prejudices either way."

"Your suggestion?"

"My theory that, if Mark killed his brother, it was purely accidental—as I told the inspector."

Bill looked up with interest.

"You mean that Robert did the hold-up business," he said, "and there was a struggle, and the pistol went off, and then Mark lost his head and bolted? That the idea?"

"Exactly."

"Well, that seems all right," said Bill. He turned to Antony. "There's nothing wrong with that, is there? It's the most natural explanation to any one who knows Mark."

Antony pulled at his pipe.

"I suppose it is," he said slowly. "But there's one thing that worries me."

"What's that?" Bill and Cayley asked the question simultaneously.

"The key."

"The key?" said Bill.

Cayley lifted his head and looked at Antony. "What about the key?" he asked.

"Well, there may be nothing in it, I just wondered. Suppose Robert was killed as you say, and suppose Mark lost his head and thought of nothing but getting away before any one could see him. Well very likely he'd lock the door and put the key in his pocket. He'd do it without thinking, just to gain a moment's time."

"Yes, that's what I suggest."

"It seems sound enough," said Bill. "Sort of thing you'd do without thinking. Besides, if you *are* going to run away, it gives you more of a chance."

"Yes, that's all right if the key is there. But suppose it isn't there?"

The suggestion made so calmly by Antony startled them both. They looked at him wonderingly.

"What do you mean?" said Cayley.

"Well, it's just a question of where people happen to keep their keys. You go up to your bedroom, and perhaps you like to lock your door in case anybody comes wandering in when you've only got one sock and a pair of suspenders on. Well, that's natural enough. And if you look around the bedrooms of almost any house, you'll find the keys all ready, so that you can lock yourself in at a moment's notice. But down-stairs people don't lock themselves in. It's really never done at all. Bill, for instance, has never locked himself into the dining-room in order to be alone with the ham. On the other hand, all women, and particularly servants, have a horror of burglars. And if a burglar gets in by the window, they like to limit his activities to that particular room. So they keep the keys on the outside of the doors, and lock the doors when they go to bed." He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and added, "At least, my mother always used to."

"You mean," said Bill excitedly, "that the key was on the outside of the door when Mark went into the room?"

"Well, I was just wondering."

"Have you noticed the other rooms—the billiard-room, and library, and so on?" said Cayley.

"I've only just thought about it while I've been sitting out here. You live here—haven't *you* ever noticed them?"

*Everybody's Magazine, September*, 1921

Cayley sat considering, with his head on one side.

"It seems rather absurd, you know, but I can't say that I have." He turned to Bill. "Have you?"

"Good Lord, no, I should never worry about a thing like that."

"I'm sure you wouldn't," laughed Antony. "Well, we can have a look when we go in. If the other keys are outside, then this one was probably outside, and in that case—well, it makes it more interesting."

Cayley said nothing. Bill chewed a piece of grass thoughtfully, and then said, "Does it make much difference?"

"It makes it more hard to understand what happened in there. Take your accidental theory and see where you get to. No instinctive turning of the key now, is there? He's got to open the door to get it, and opening the door means showing his head to anybody in the hall—his cousin, for instance, whom he left there two minutes ago. Is a man in Mark's state of mind, frightened to death lest he should be found with the body, going to do anything so foolhardy as that?"

"He needn't have been afraid of *me*," said Cayley.

"Then why didn't he call for you? He knew you were about. You could have advised him; Heaven knows he wanted advice. But the whole theory of Mark's escape is that he was afraid of you and of everybody else, and that he had no other idea but to get out of the room himself, and prevent you or the servants from coming into it. If the key had been on the inside he would probably have locked the door. If it were on the outside, he almost certainly wouldn't."

"Yes, I expect you're right," said Bill thoughtfully. "Unless he took the key in with him and locked the door at once."

"Exactly. But in that case you have to build up a new theory entirely."

"You mean that it makes it seem more deliberate?"

"Yes; that, certainly. But it also seems to make Mark out an absolute idiot. Just suppose for a moment that, for urgent reasons which neither of you know anything about, he had wished to get rid of his brother. Would he have done it like that? Just killed him and then run away?

Why, that's practically suicide—suicide while of unsound mind. No; if you really wanted to remove an undesirable brother, you would do it a little bit more cleverly than that. You'd begin by treating him as a friend, so as to avoid suspicion, and when you did kill him at last, you would try to make it look like an accident, or suicide, or the work of some other man. Wouldn't you?"

Bill tried another blade of grass before answering.

"You mean," he said, looking up at Antony, "you'd give yourself a bit of a run for your money?"

"Yes, that's what I mean. If you were going to do it deliberately, that is to say—and lock yourself in before you began."

Cayley had been silent, apparently thinking over this new idea. With his eyes still on the ground , he said now:

"I hold to my opinion that it was purely accidental, and that Mark lost his head and ran away."

"But what about the key?" asked Bill.

"We don't know yet that the keys *were* outside. I don't at all agree with Mr. Gillingham that the keys of the downstairs rooms are always outside the doors. Sometimes they are, no doubt; but I think we shall probably find that these are inside."

"Oh, well, of course, if they are inside, then your original theory is probably the correct one. Having often seen them outside in other houses, I just wondered—that's all. You asked me to be quite frank, you know, and tell you what I thought. But no doubt you're right, and we shall find them inside.

"I still think it must have been accidental," went on Cayley stubbornly. "He might have taken it in with him, knowing that the interview would be an unpleasant one and not wishing to be interrupted."

"But he had just told you to stand by in case he wanted you; so why should he lock you out? Besides, I should think that if a man were going to have an unpleasant interview with a threatening relation, the last thing he would do would be to barricade himself in with him. He would want to open all the doors and say, 'Get out of here!' "

Cayley was silent, but his mouth looked obstinate. Antony gave a little apologetic laugh and stood up.

"Well, come on, Bill," he said; "we ought to be going." He held out a hand and pulled his friend up. Then, turning to Cayley, he went on. "You must forgive me, Mr. Cayley, if I have let my thoughts run on. Of course, I was considering the matter purely as an outsider; just as a problem, I mean, which didn't concern the happiness of any of my friends."

"That's all right, Mr. Gillingham," said Cayley, standing up too. "It is for you to make allowances for *me*. I'm sure you will. You say that you're going up to the inn now about your bag?"

"Yes." He looked up at the sun and then round the parkland stretching about the house. "Let me see; it's over in that direction, isn't it?" He pointed southward. "Can we get to the village that way, or must we go by the road?"

"I'll show you, my boy," said Bill.

"Bill will show you. The park reaches almost as far as the village. Then I'll send the car round in about half an hour?"

"Thanks very much."

Cayley nodded and turned to go into the house. Antony took hold of Bill's arm and walked off with him in the opposite direction.

THEY walked in silence for a little until they had left the house and gardens well behind them. In front of them and to the right the park dipped and then rose slowly, shutting out the rest of the world. A thick belt of trees on the left divided them from the main road.

"Ever been here before?" said Antony suddenly.

"Oh, dozens of times."

"Yes. All right; now tell me something about Mark."

"What sort of things?"

"Well, never mind about his being your host, or about your being a perfect gentleman, or anything like that. Cut out the "Manners for Men" and tell me what you think of Mark, and how you like staying with him, and how many rows your little house-party has had this week, and how you get on with Cayley, and all the rest of it."

Bill looked at him eagerly.

"Say, are you being the complete detective?"

"Well, I wanted a new profession," smiled the other.

"What fun! I mean," he corrected himself apologetically, "one oughtn't to say that when there's a man dead in the house and one's host—" He broke off a little uncertainly and then rounded off his period by saying again, "Jove, what a strange situation it is. Good Lord!"

"Well?" said Antony. "Go ahead, what about Mark?"

"What do I think of him?"

"Yes."

Bill was silent, wondering how to put into words thoughts which had never formed themselves very definitely in his own mind. What *did* he think of Mark? Seeing his hesitation, Antony said:

"I'll give you a start. Which do you enjoy more—a week-end here or at the Barringtons, say?"

"Well, of course, that would depend——"

"Take it that she was there in both cases."

"Ass," said Bill, putting an elbow into Antony's ribs. "It's a little difficult to say," he went on. "Of course they entertain you awfully well here."

"Yes?"

"Yes." He repeated it slowly to himself, as if it had given him a new idea. "They look after you awfully well. Well, that's just what it is about Mark. That's one of his little ways—weaknesses—looking after you and arranging things."

"Arranging things for you? How do you mean?"

"Well, Mark fancies himself good at arranging things. He arranges things and it's an understood thing that the guests fall in with the arrangement. For instance, Betty—Miss Calladine—and I were going to play a single just before tea the other day—tennis. She's frightfully good at tennis, and proposed to take me on at a scratch. I'm rather erratic, you know. Mark saw us going out with rackets and asked us what we were going to do. Well, he'd got up a little tournament for us after tea—handicaps all arranged by him, and everything ruled out neatly in red and black ink—prizes and all—quite decent ones, you know. He'd had the lawn specially cut and marked for it. Well, of course Betty and I wouldn't have spoiled the court, and we'd have been quite ready to play again after tea—I had to give her half-fifteen according to his handicap—but somehow—" Bill stopped and shrugged his shoulders.

"It didn't quite fit in?"

"No. It spoiled the effect of his tournament. Took the edge off it just a little, I suppose he felt. So we didn't play." He laughed, and added: "It would have been as much as our place was worth to have played."

"Do you mean you wouldn't have been asked here again?"

"Probably. Well, I don't know—Not for some time, anyway."

"Really, Bill?"

"Yes, he's a devil for taking offense. That Miss Norris—did you see her—*she's* done for herself. I don't mind betting what you like that *she* never comes here again."

"Why?"

Bill laughed to himself.

"We were all in it, really—at least Betty and I were. There's supposed to be a ghost attached to the house—Lady Anne Patten. Ever heard of her?"

"Never."

"Mark told us about her at dinner one night. He rather liked the idea of there being a ghost in his house, you know, except that he doesn't believe in ghosts. I think he wanted all of *us* to believe in her, and yet he was annoyed with Betty and Mrs. Calladine for believing in ghosts at all. Queer chap. Well, anyhow, Miss Norris—she's an actress, some actress too—dressed up as a ghost and played the fool a bit. And poor Mark was frightened out of his life. Just for a moment, you know."

"What about the others?"

"Well, Betty and I knew; in fact, I'd told her—Miss Norris, I mean—not to be frightened, knowing Mark. Mrs. Calladine wasn't there—Betty wouldn't let her be. As for the major, I don't believe anything would frighten *him*."

"Where did the ghost appear?"

"Down by the bowling-green. That's supposed to be its haunt, you know. We were all down there in the moonlight pretending to wait for it. Do you know the bowling-green?"

"No."

"I'll show it to you after dinner."

"I wish you would. Was Mark very angry afterward?"

"Oh, Lord, yes. Sulked for a whole day. Well, he's just like that."

"Was he angry with all of you?"

"Oh, yes—sulky, you know."

"This morning?"

"Oh, no. He got over it—he generally does. He's just like a child. That's really it, Tony; he's like a child in some ways. As a matter of fact, he was unusually pleased with himself this morning—and yesterday."

"Yesterday?"

"We all said we'd never seen him in such form."

"Is he generally in form?"

"He's quite good company, you know, if you take him the right way. He's rather vain and childish—well, like I've been telling you—and self-important; but quite amusing in his way, and—" Bill broke off suddenly. "I say, you know, it really is the limit, talking about your host like this."

"Don't think of him as your host. Think of him as a suspected murderer with a warrant out against him."

"Oh, but that's all rot, you know."

"It's the fact, Bill."

"Yes, but I mean he didn't do it. He wouldn't murder anybody. It's a funny thing to say, but—well, he's not big enough for it. He's got his faults, like all of us, but they aren't on that scale."

"One can kill anybody in a childish fit of temper."

Bill grunted assent, but without prejudice to Mark. "All the same," he said, "I can't believe it. That he would do it deliberately, I mean."

"Suppose it was an accident, as Cayley says. Would he lose his head and run away?"

Bill considered for a moment.

"Yes, I really think he might, you know. He nearly ran away when he saw the ghost. Of course, that's rather different."

"Oh, I don't know. In each case it's a question of obeying your instinct instead of your reason."

THEY had left the open land and were following a path through the bordering trees. Two abreast was uncomfortable, so Antony dropped behind, and further conversation was postponed until they were outside the boundary fence and in the highroad. The road sloped gently down to the village of Woodham—a few red-roofed cottages and the gray tower of a church showing above the green.

"Well, now," said Antony, as they stepped out more quickly, "what about Cayley?"

"How do you mean, what about him?"

"I want to see him. I can see Mark perfectly, thanks to you, Bill. You were wonderful. Now let's have Cayley's character—Cayley from within."

Bill laughed in pleased embarrassment, and protested that he was not a professional reader of character.

"Besides," he added, "Mark's easy. Cayley's one of these heavy, quiet people, who might be thinking about anything. Mark gives himself away. Ugly, black-jawed devil, isn't he?"

"Some women like that type of ugliness."

"Yes, that's true. Between ourselves, I think there's one here who does—a pretty girl at Jallands"—he waved his left hand—"down that way."

"What's Jallands?"

"Well, I suppose it used to be a farm, belonging to a chap called Jalland, but now it's a country cottage belonging to a widow called Norbury. Mark and Cayley used to go there a good deal together. Miss Norbury—the girl—has been here once or twice for tennis; seemed to prefer Cayley to the rest of us. But of course he hadn't much time for that sort of thing."

"What sort of thing?"

"Walking about with a pretty girl and asking her if she's been to any theaters lately. He nearly always had something to do."

"Mark kept him busy?"

"Yes. Mark never seemed quite happy unless he had Cayley doing something for him. He was quite lost and helpless without him. And, funnily enough, Cayley seemed lost without Mark."

"He was fond of him?"

"Yes, I should say so. In a protective kind of way. He'd sized Mark up, of course—his vanity, his self-importance, his amateurishness and all the rest of it—but he liked looking after him. And he knew how to manage him."

"Yes. What sort of terms was he on with the guests—you and Miss Norris and all of them?"

"Just polite and rather silent, you know.

Keeping himself to himself. We didn't see so very much of him, except at meals. We were here to enjoy ourselves, and—well, *he* wasn't."

"He wasn't there when the ghost walked?"

"No. I heard Mark calling for him when he went back to the house. I expect Cayley stroked down his feathers a bit, and told him that girls will be girls. Hallo! Here we are."

They went into the inn, and while Bill made himself pleasant to the landlady, Antony went up-stairs to his room. It appeared that he had not very much packing to do after all. He returned his brushes to his bag, glanced round to see that nothing had been taken, and went down again to settle his bill.

He had decided to keep his room for a few days; partly to save the landlord and his wife the disappointment of losing a guest so suddenly, partly in case he found it undesirable later on to remain at the Red House.

For Antony was taking himself seriously as a detective; indeed, he took himself seriously (while getting all the fun out of it which was possible) at every new profession he adopted; and he felt that there might come a time—after the inquest, say—when he could not decently remain at the Red House as a guest, a friend of Bill's, enjoying the hospitality of Mark or Cayley, whichever was to be regarded as his host, without forfeiting his independent attitude toward the events of that afternoon.

For of one thing Antony was certain. Cayley knew more than he professed to know. That is to say, he knew more than he wanted other people to know he knew. Antony was one of the "other people"; if, therefore, he was for trying to find out what it was that Cayley knew, he could hardly expect Cayley's approval of his labors. It would be the George, then, for Antony after the inquest.

What was the truth? Not necessarily discreditable to Cayley, even though he were hiding something. All that could be said against him at the moment was that he had gone the longest way round to get into the locked office—and that this did not fit in with what he had told the inspector. But it did fit in with the theory that he had been an accessory after the event, and that he wanted (while appearing to be in a hurry) to give his cousin as much time as possible in which to escape. That might not be the true solution, but it was at least a workable one. The theory which he had suggested to the inspector was not.

However, there would be a day or two before the inquest, in which Antony could consider all these matters from within the Red House. The car was at the door. He got in with Bill, the landlord put his bag on the front seat next to the chauffeur, and they drove back.

ANTONY'S bedroom looked over the park at the back of the house. The blinds were not yet drawn while he was changing his clothes for dinner, and at various stages of undress he would pause and gaze out of the window, sometimes smiling to himself, sometimes frowning, as he turned over in his mind all the strange things that he had seen that day. He was sitting on his bed, in shirt and trousers, absently smoothing down his thick black hair with his brushes, when Bill shouted an "Hallo!" through the door, and came in.

"I say, hurry up, old boy, I'm hungry," he said cheerfully.

Antony stopped smoothing himself and looked up at him thoughtfully.

"Where's Mark?" he said.

"Mark? You mean Cayley."

Antony corrected himself with a little laugh. "Yes, I mean Cayley. Is he down? I shan't be a moment, Bill." He got up from the bed and went on briskly with his dressing.

"Oh, by the way, Tony," said Bill, taking his place on the bed, "your idea about the keys is no good."

"Why, how do you mean?"

"I went down just now and had a look at them. We were asses not to have thought of it when we came in. The library key is outside, but all the others are inside."

"Yes, I know."

"You devil, I suppose you did think of it, then?"

"I did, Bill," said Antony apologetically.

"Bother! I hoped you'd forgotten. Well, that knocks your theory on the head, doesn't it?"

"I never had a theory. I only said that *if* they were outside, it would probably mean that the office key was outside, and that in that case Cayley's theory was knocked in the head."

"Well, now it isn't, and we don't know anything. Some were outside and some inside, and there you are. It makes it much less exciting. When you were talking about it on the lawn, I really got quite keen on the idea of the key being outside and Mark taking it in with him."

"It's going to be exciting enough," said Antony mildly, as he transferred his pipe and tobacco into the pocket of his black coat. "Well, let's come down; I'm ready now."

Cayley was waiting for them in the hall. He made some polite inquiry as to Antony's comfort, and the three of them fell into a casual conversation about houses in general and the Red House in particular.

"You were quite right about the keys," said Bill, during a pause. He was less able than the other two, perhaps because he was younger than they, to keep away from the subject which was uppermost in the minds of them all.

"Keys?" said Cayley blankly.

"We were wondering whether they were outside or inside."

"Oh! oh, yes." He looked slowly round the hall at the different doors, and then smiled in a friendly way at Antony.

"We both seem to have been right, Mr. Gillingham. So we don't get much farther."

"No." He gave a shrug. "I just wondered, you know. I thought it was worth mentioning."

"Oh, quite. Not that you would have convinced me, you know. Just as Elsie's evidence doesn't convince me."

"Elsie?" said Bill excitedly. Antony looked inquiringly at him, wondering who Elsie was.

"One of the housemaids," explained Cayley. "You didn't hear what she told the inspector? Of course, as I told Birch, girls of that class make things up, but he seemed to think she was genuine."

"What was it?" said Bill.

Cayley told them of what Elsie had heard through the office door that afternoon.

"You were in the library then, of course," said Antony, rather to himself than to the other. "She might have gone through the hall without your hearing."

"Oh, I've no doubt she was there, and heard voices. Perhaps heard those very words. But—" He broke off, and then added impatiently, "It was accidental. I know it was accidental. What's the good of talking as if Mark were a murderer?" Dinner was announced at that moment, and as they went in, he added, "What's the good of talking about it at all, if it comes to that?"

"What indeed?" said Antony, and to Bill's great disappointment they talked of books and politics during the meal.

CAYLEY made no excuse for leaving them as soon as their cigars were alight. He had business to attend to, as was natural. Bill would look after his friend. Bill was only too willing. He offered to beat Antony at billiards, to show him the garden by moonlight, or indeed to do anything else with him that he required.

"Thank the Lord you're here," he said piously. "I couldn't have stood it alone."

"Let's go outside," suggested Antony. "It's quite warm. Somewhere where we can sit down, right away from the house. I want to talk to you."

"Good man. What about the bowling-green?"

"Oh, you were going to show me that anyhow, weren't you? Is it somewhere where we can talk without being overheard?"

"Oh yes, the ideal place. You'll see."

They came out of the front door and followed the drive to the left. Coming from Woodham, Antony had approached the house that afternoon from the other side. The way they were going now would take them out at the opposite end of the park, on the high road to Stanton, a country town some three miles away. They passed by a gate and a gardener's lodge, which marked the limit of what auctioneers like to call "the ornamental grounds of the estate," and then the open park was before them.

"Sure we haven't missed it?" said Antony. The park lay quietly in the moonlight on either side of the drive, wearing a little way ahead of them a deceptive air of smoothness which retreated always as they advanced.

"Strange, isn't it?" said Bill. "An absurd place for a bowling-green, but I suppose it was always here."

"Yes, but always where? It's short enough for golf, perhaps, but—Hallo!"

They had come to the place. The road bent round to the right but they kept straight on over a broad grass path for twenty yards and there in front of them was the green. A dry ditch ten feet wide and six feet deep surrounded it except in the one place where the path went forward. Two or three grass steps led down to the green on which there was a long wooden bench for the benefit of spectators.

"Yes, it hides itself very nicely," said Antony. "Where do you keep the bowls?"

"In a sort of summer-house place. Round here."

They walked along the edge of the green until they came to it—a low wooden bunk which had been built into one wall of the ditch.

"H'm. Jolly view," said Antony.

Bill laughed.

"Nobody sits there. It's just for keeping things out of the rain."

They finished their circuit of the green—"just in case anybody's in the ditch," said Antony—and then sat down on the bench.

"Now then," said Bill, "we are alone. Fire ahead."

ANTONY smoked thoughtfully for a little. Then he took his pipe out of his mouth and turned to his friend.

"Are you prepared to be the complete Watson?" he asked.

"Watson?"

"Do-you-follow-me-Watson; that one. Are you prepared to have quite obvious things explained to you, to ask futile questions, to give me chances of scoring off you, to make brilliant discoveries of your own two or three days after I have made them myself—all that kind of thing? Because it all helps."

"My dear Tony," said Bill delightedly, "need you ask?" Antony said nothing, and Bill went on happily to himself, "I perceive from the strawberry-mark on your shirt-front that you had strawberries for dessert. Holmes, you astonish me. Tut-tut, you know my method. Where is the tobacco? The tobacco is in the Persian slipper. Can I leave my practise for a week? I can."

Antony smiled and went on smoking. After waiting hopefully for a minute or two, Bill said in a firm voice:

"Well then, Holmes, I feel bound to ask you if you have deduced anything. Also whom do you suspect?"

Antony began to talk.

"Do you remember," he said, "one of Holmes' little scores over Watson about the number of steps up to the Baker Street lodging? Poor old Watson had been up and down them a thousand times but he had never thought of counting them, whereas Holmes had counted them as a matter of course and knew that there were seventeen. And that was supposed to be the difference between observation and non-observation. Watson was crushed again, and Holmes appeared to him more amazing than ever. Now, it always seemed to me that in that matter Holmes was the ass and Watson the sensible person. What on earth is the point of keeping in your head an unnecessary fact like that? If you really want to know at any time the number of steps to your lodging, you can ring up your landlady and ask her. I've been up and down the steps of the club a thousand times; but if you asked me to tell you at this moment how many steps there are, I couldn't do it. Could you?"

"I certainly couldn't," said Bill.

"But if you really wanted to know," said Antony casually, with a sudden change of voice, "I could find out for you without even bothering to ring up the hall-porter."

Bill was puzzled as to why they were talking about the club steps, but he felt it his duty to say that he did want to know how many they were.

"Right," said Antony. "I'll find out."

He closed his eyes.

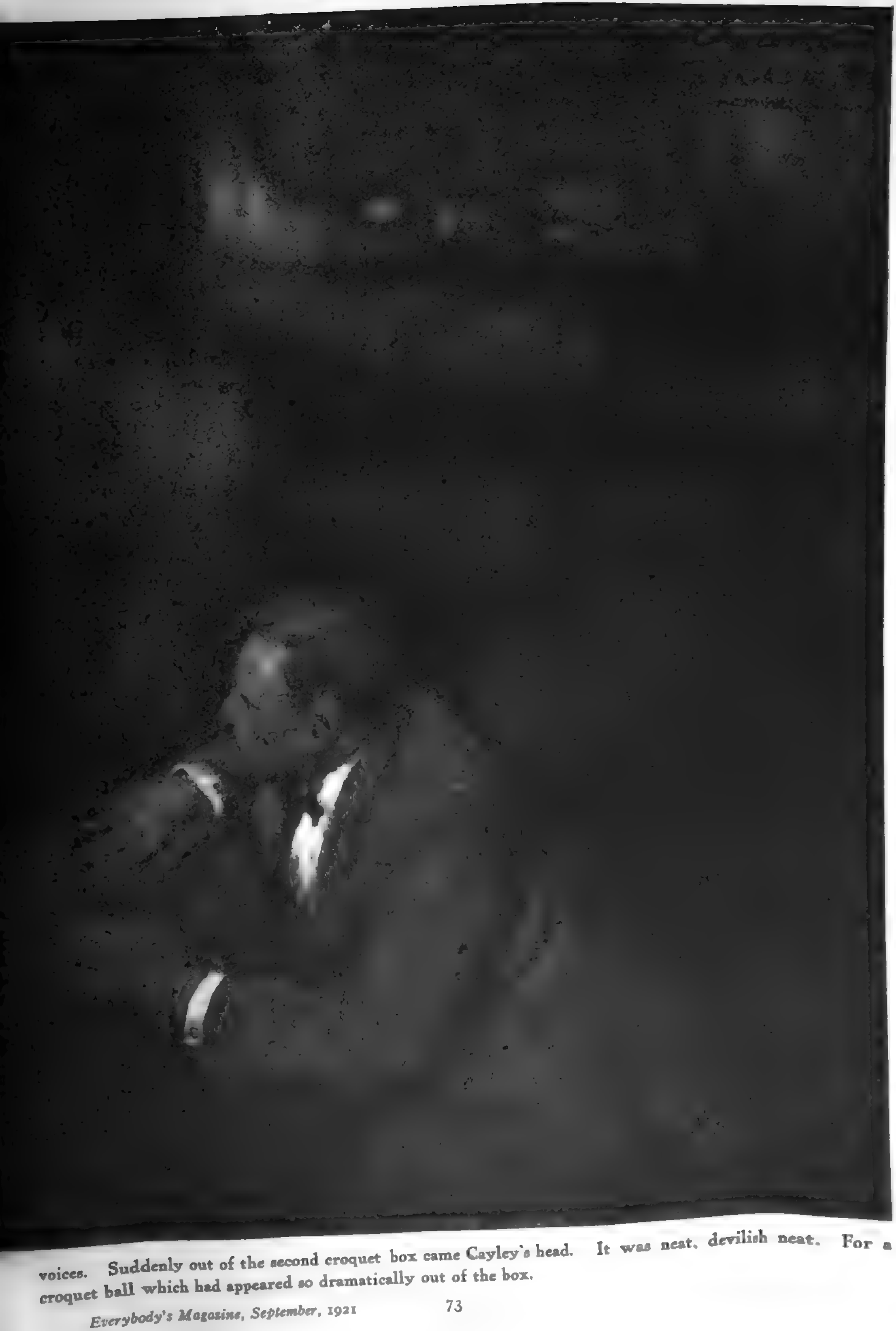
"I'm walking up St. James Street," he said slowly. "Now I've come to the club and I'm going past the smoking-room windows—one—two—three—four. Now I'm at the steps. I turn in and begin going up them. One—two—three—four—five—six, then a broad step; six—seven—eight—nine, another broad step; nine—ten—eleven. Eleven—I'm inside. Good morning, Rogers. Fine day again." With a little start he opened his eyes and came back again to his present surroundings. He turned to Bill with a smile. "Eleven," he said. "Count them the next time you're there. Eleven—and now I hope I shall forget it again."

Bill was distinctly interested.

"That's rather hot," he said. "Expound."

"Well, I can't explain it, whether it's

The footsteps Antony heard seemed to be underneath the shed. Whoever it was would have heard their
moment Antony gazed fascinated at that wonderful new kind of



voices. Suddenly out of the second croquet box came Cayley's head. It was neat, devilish neat. For a croquet ball which had appeared so dramatically out of the box.

*Everybody's Magazine, September, 1921* 73 something in the actual eye, or something in the brain, or what, but I have got rather an uncanny habit of recording things unconsciously. You know that game where you look at a tray full of small objects for ten minutes, and then turn away and try to make a list of them. It means a devil of a lot of concentration for the ordinary person, if he wants to get his list complete; but in some odd way I manage to do it without concentration at all. I mean that my eyes seem to do it without the brain consciously taking any part. I could look at the tray, for instance, and talk to you about golf at the same time, and still get my list right."

"I should think that's rather a useful gift for an amateur detective. You ought to have gone into the profession before."

"Well, it *is* rather useful. It's rather surprising, you know, to a stranger. Let's surprise Cayley with it, shall we?"

"How?"

"Well, let's ask him—" Antony stopped and looked at Bill comically—"let's ask him what he's going to do with the key of the office."

FOR a moment Bill did not understand. "Key of the office?" he said vaguely. "You don't mean—Tony! What do you mean? Good God! do you mean that Cayley—But what about Mark?"

"I don't know where Mark is—that's another thing I want to know—but I'm quite certain that he hasn't got the key of the office with him. Because Cayley's got it."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite."

Bill looked at him wonderingly.

"Say," he said, almost pleadingly, "don't tell me that you can see into people's pockets and all that sort of thing—as well."

Antony laughed and denied it cheerfully.

"Then how do you know?"

"Of course, I don't really know that he's got it, but I do know that he had it. I know that when I came on him this afternoon, he had just locked the door and put the key in his pocket."

"You mean you saw him at the time, but that you've only just remembered it—reconstructed it—in the way you were explaining just now?"

"No. I didn't see him. But I did see something. I saw the key of the billiard-room."

"Where?"

"Outside the billiard-room door."

"Outside?" But it was inside when we looked just now."

"Exactly."

"Who put it there?"

"Obviously Cayley."

"But——"

"Let's go back to this afternoon. I don't remember noticing the billiard-room key at the time, I must have done so without knowing. Probably when I saw Cayley banging at the door I may have wondered subconsciously whether the key of the room next to it would fit. Something like that, I dare say. Well, when I was sitting out by myself on that seat just before you came along, I went over the whole scene in my mind, and I suddenly saw the billiard-room key there—outside. And I began to wonder if the office-key had been outside, too. When Cayley came up, I told you my idea and you were both interested. But Cayley was just a shade too interested. I dare say you didn't notice it, but he was.

"Well, of course that proved nothing; and the key business didn't really prove anything, because whatever side of the door the other keys were, Mark might have locked his own private room from the inside sometimes. But I piled it on, and pretended that it was enormously important, and quite altered the case altogether, and having got Cayley thoroughly anxious about it, I told him that we should be well out of the way for the next hour or so, and that he would be alone in the house to do what he liked about it. And, as I expected he couldn't resist it. He altered the keys and gave himself away entirely."

"But the library key was still outside. Why didn't he alter that?"

"Because he's a clever devil. For one thing, the inspector had been in the library, and might possibly have noticed it already. And for another—" Antony hesitated.

"What?" said Bill, after waiting for him to go on.

"It's only guesswork. But I fancy that Cayley was thoroughly upset about the key business. He suddenly realized that he had been careless, and he hadn't got time to think it all over. So he didn't want to commit himself definitely to the statement that the key was either outside or inside. He wanted to leave it vague. It was safest that way."

"I see," said Bill slowly.

BUT his mind was elsewhere. He was wondering suddenly about Cayley. Cayley was just an ordinary man—like himself. Bill had had little jokes with him sometimes; not that Cayley was much of a hand at joking. Bill had helped him to sausages, played tennis with him, borrowed his tobacco, lent him a putter—and here was Antony saying that he was—what? Well, not an ordinary man, anyway. A man with a secret. Perhaps a—a murderer. No, not a murderer; not Cayley. That was rot, anyway. Why, they had played tennis together.

"Now then, Bill," said Antony suddenly. "It's time you said something."

"I wonder, Tony, do you really mean it?"

"Mean what?"

"About Cayley."

"I mean what I said, Bill. No more."

"Well, what does it amount to?"

"Simply that Robert Ablett died in the office this afternoon, and that Cayley knows exactly how he died. That's all. It doesn't follow that Cayley killed him."

"No. No, of course it doesn't." Bill gave a sigh of relief. "He's just shielding Mark?"

"I wonder."

"Well, isn't that the simplest explanation?"

"It's the simplest if you're a friend of Cayley and want to let him down lightly. But then I'm not, you see."

"Why isn't it simple, anyhow?"

"Well, let's have the explanation then, and I'll undertake to give you a simpler one afterward. Go on. Only remember—the key is on the outside of the door to start with."

"Yes; well, I don't mind that. Mark goes in to see his brother, and they quarrel and all the rest of it, just as Cayley was saying. Cayley hears the shot, and in order to give Mark time to get away, locks the door, puts the key in his pocket and pretends that Mark has locked the door, and that he can't get in. How's that?"

"Hopeless, Bill, hopeless."

"Why?"

"How does Cayley know that it is Mark who has shot Robert, and not the other way round?"

"Oh!" said Bill, rather upset. "Yes." He thought for a moment. "All right. Say that Cayley has gone into the room first, and seen Robert on the ground."

"Well?"

"Well, there you are."

"And what does he say to Mark? That it's a fine afternoon, and could he lend him a pocket-handkerchief? Or does he ask him what's happened?"

"Well, of course, I suppose he asks what happened," said Bill reluctantly.

"And what does Mark say?"

"Explains that the revolver went off accidentally during a struggle."

"Whereupon Cayley shields him by—by doing what, Bill? Encouraging him to do the damn silliest thing that any man could possibly do—confess his guilt by running away?"

"No, that's rather hopeless, isn't it?" Bill thought again. "Well," he said reluctantly, "suppose Mark confessed that he'd murdered his brother?"

"That's better, Bill. Don't be afraid of getting away from the accident idea. Well then, your new theory is this. Mark confesses to Cayley that he shot Robert on purpose and Cayley decides, even at the risk of committing perjury and getting into trouble himself, to help Mark to escape. Is that right?"

Bill nodded.

"Well then, I want to ask you two questions: First, is it possible, as I said before dinner, that any man would commit such an idiotic murder—a murder that puts the rope so very tightly round his neck? Secondly, if Cayley is prepared to perjure himself for Mark (as he has to, anyway, now), wouldn't it be simpler for him to say that he was in the office all the time and that Robert's death was accidental?"

Bill considered this carefully and then nodded slowly again.

"Yes, my simple explanation is a washout," he said. "Now let's have yours."

Antony did not answer him. He had begun to think about something quite different.

"What's the matter?" said Bill, his voice sharp with excitement.

Antony looked round at him with raised eyebrows.

"You've thought of something suddenly," said Bill. "What is it?"

"Well, I was wondering about this ghost of yours, Bill. It seems to me——"

"Oh, hades!" Bill was profoundly disappointed. "What on earth has the ghost got to do with it?"

"I don't know," said Antony apologetically. "I don't know what anything has got to do with it. I was just wondering. You shouldn't have brought me here if you hadn't wanted me to think about the ghost. This is where she appeared, isn't it?"

"Yes." Bill was distinctly short about it.

"How?"

"What?"

"I said, How?"

"How? How *do* ghosts appear? I don't know. They just appear."

"Over four or five hundred yards of open park?"

"Well, but she had to appear here, because this is where the original one—Lady Anne, you know—was supposed to walk."

"Oh, never mind Lady Anne. A real ghost can do anything. But how did Miss Norris appear suddenly—over five hundred yards of bare park?"

Bill looked at Antony with open mouth.

"I—I don't know," he stammered. "We never thought of that."

"You would have seen her long before, wouldn't you, if she had come the way *we* came?"

"Of course we should."

"And that would have spoiled it. You would have had time to recognize her walk."

Bill was interested now.

"That's funny, you know, Tony. We none of us thought of that."

"You're sure she didn't come across the park when none of you were looking?"

"Quite. Because, you see, Betty and I were expecting her, and we kept looking round in case we saw her, so that we could get Mark and the major playing with their backs to her."

"Well, then, you suddenly saw her?"

"Yes, she walked across that side of the lawn." He indicated the opposite side, nearer to the house.

"She couldn't have been hiding in the ditch? Do you call it the moat, by the way?"

"Mark does. We don't among ourselves. No, she couldn't. Betty and I were here before the others, and walked round a bit. We should have seen her."

"Then she must have been hiding in the shed. Or do you call it the summer-house?"

"We had to go there for the bowls, of course. She couldn't have been there."

"Oh!"

"It's devilish funny," said Bill, after an interval for thought. "But it doesn't matter, does it? It has nothing to do with Robert."

"Hasn't it?"

"I say *has* it?" said Bill, getting excited again.

"I don't know. We don't know what has, or what hasn't. But it *has* got something to do with Miss Norris. And Miss Norris—" He broke off suddenly.

"What about her?"

"Well, you're all in it in a kind of way. And if something unaccountable happens to one of you a day or two before something unaccountable happens to the whole house, one is—well, interested." It was a good enough reason, but it wasn't the reason he had been on the point of giving.

"I see. Well?"

Antony knocked out his pipe and got up slowly.

"Well, then, let's find the way to the house by which Miss Norris came."

Bill jumped up eagerly.

"By George! Do you mean there's a secret passage?"

"A secluded passage, anyway. There must be."

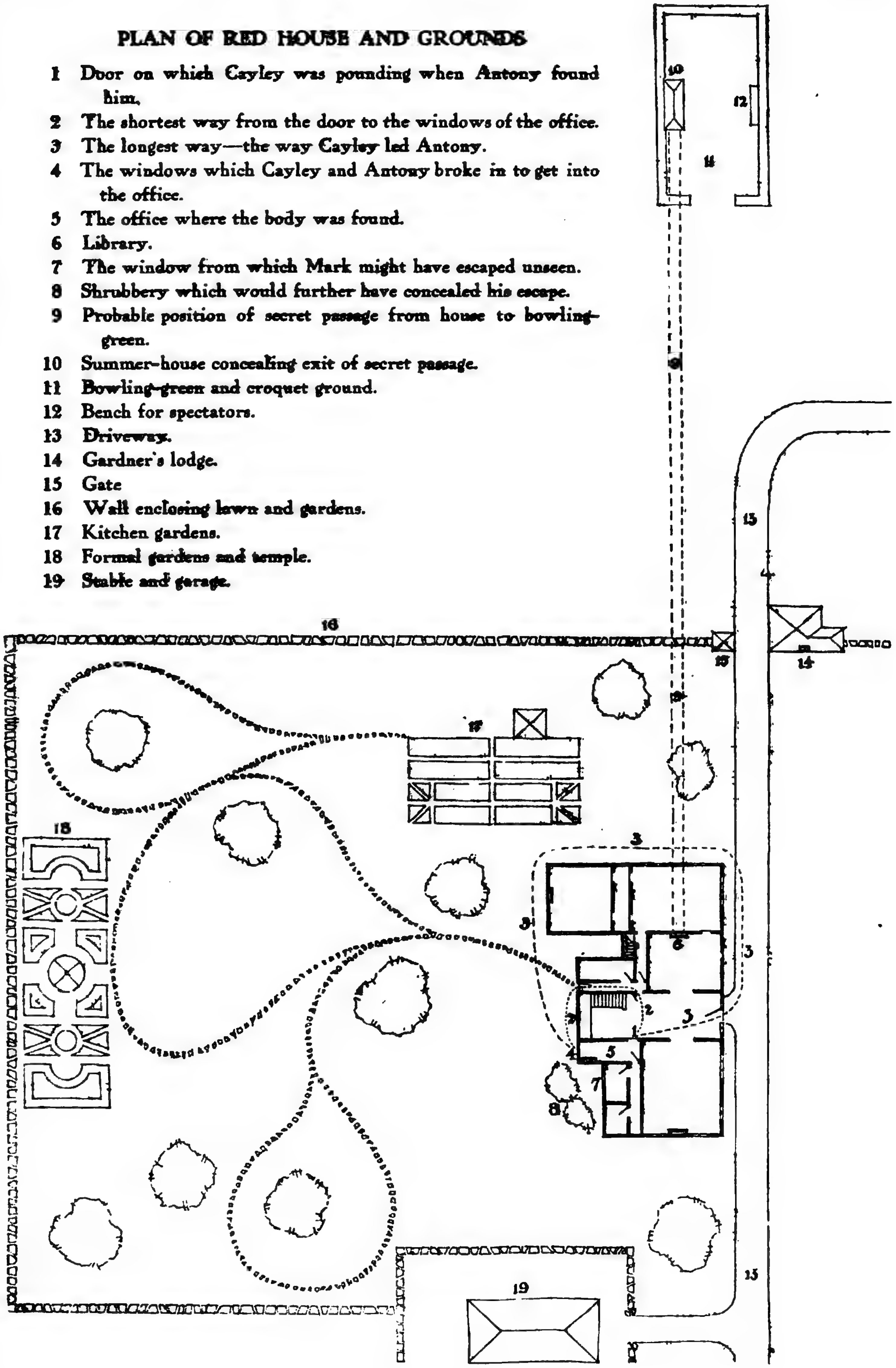
They made their way down into the ditch. If an opening was to be found which led to the house, it would probably be on the house side of the green, and on the outside of the ditch. The most obvious place at which to begin the search was the shed where the bowls were kept. It was a tidy place—as anything in Mark's establishment would be. There were two boxes of croquet things, one of them with the lid open, as if the balls and mallets and wickets (neatly enough put away, though) had been recently used; a box of bowls, a small lawn-mower, a roller and so forth. A seat ran along the back of it, whereon the bowls-players could sit when it rained.

Antony tapped the wall at the back.

"This is where the passage ought to begin. It doesn't sound very hollow, does it?"

## PLAN OF RED HOUSE AND GROUNDS

1 Door on which Cayley was pounding when Antony found him.
2 The shortest way from the door to the windows of the office.
3 The longest way—the way Cayley led Antony.
4 The windows which Cayley and Antony broke in to get into the office.
5 The office where the body was found.
6 Library.
7 The window from which Mark might have escaped unseen.
8 Shrubbery which would further have concealed his escape.
9 Probable position of secret passage from house to bowling-green.
10 Summer-house concealing exit of secret passage.
11 Bowling-green and croquet ground.
12 Bench for spectators.
13 Driveway.
14 Gardner's lodge.
15 Gate
16 Wall enclosing lawn and gardens.
17 Kitchen gardens.
18 Formal gardens and temple.
19 Stable and garage.



"It needn't begin here at all, need it?" said Bill, walking round with bent head, and tapping the other walls. He was just too tall to stand upright in the shed.

"There's only one reason why it should, and that is that it would save us the trouble of looking anywhere else for it. Surely Mark didn't let you play croquet on his bowling-green?" He pointed to the croquet things.

"He didn't encourage it at one time, but this year he got rather keen about it. There's really nowhere else to play. Personally I hate the game. He wasn't very keen on bowls, you know, but he liked calling it the bowling-green and surprising his visitors with it."

Antony laughed.

"I love you when you describe Mark," he said. "You're priceless."

HE BEGAN to feel in his pockets for his pipe and tobacco, and then suddenly stopped and stiffened to attention. For a moment he stood listening, with his head on one side, holding up a finger to bid Bill listen too.

"What is it?" whispered Bill.

Antony waved him to silence and remained listening. Very quietly he went down on his knees and listened again. Then he put his ear to the floor. He got up and dusted himself quickly, walked across to Bill and whispered in his ear:

"Footsteps. Somebody coming. When I begin to talk, back me up."

Bill nodded. Antony gave him an encouraging pat on the back and stepped firmly across to the box of bowls, whistling loudly to himself. He took the bowls out, dropped one with a loud bang on the floor, said, "Oh, Lord!" and went on:

"I say, Bill, I don't think I want to play bowls, after all."

"Well, why did you say you did?" grumbled Bill.

Antony flashed a smile of appreciation at him. "Well, I wanted to when I said I did and now I don't want to."

"Then what *do* you want to do?" said Bill.

"Talk."

"Good enough," said Bill eagerly.

"There's a seat on the lawn—I saw it. Let's bring these things along in case we want to play, after all."

"Right," said Bill again. He felt safe with that, not wishing to commit himself until he knew what he was wanted to say.

As they went across the lawn, Antony dropped the bowls and took out his pipe.

"Got a match?" he said loudly.

As he bent his head over the match, he whispered, "There'll be somebody listening to us. You take the Cayley view," and then went on in his ordinary voice: "I don't think much of your matches, Bill," struck another. They walked over to the seat and sat down.

"What a heavenly night!" said Antony.

"Wonderful."

"I wonder where that poor devil Mark is now."

"It's a strange business."

"You agree with Cayley—that it was an accident?"

"Yes. You see, I know Mark."

"H'm!" Antony produced a pencil and a piece of paper and began to write on his knee, but while he wrote, he talked. He said that he thought Mark had shot his brother in a fit of anger, and that Cayley knew, or anyhow guessed, this and had tried to give his cousin a chance of getting away.

"But why do you think so? Because of the keys?"

"Oh, the keys, they amount to nothing. Still, it was a brilliant idea of mine, wasn't it? and it would have been rather fine for me if they *had* all been outside."

He had finished his writing and now passed the paper over to Bill. In the clear moonlight the carefully printed letters could easily be read.

"GO ON TALKING AS IF I WERE HERE. AFTER A MINUTE OR TWO, TURN ROUND AS IF I WERE SITTING ON THE GRASS BEHIND YOU, BUT GO ON TALKING."

"I know you don't agree with me," Antony went on as Bill read, "but you'll see that I'm right."

Bill looked up and nodded eagerly. He had forgotten golf and Betty and all the other things which had made up his world lately. This was the real thing. This was life.

"Well," he began deliberately, "the whole point is that I know Mark. Now, Mark——"

But Antony was off the seat and letting

himself gently down into the ditch. His intention was to crawl round it until the shed came in sight. The footsteps which he had heard seemed to be underneath the shed; probably there was a trap-door of some kind in the floor. Whoever it was would have heard their voices, and would probably think it worth while to listen to what they were saying. He might do this merely by opening the door a little without showing himself, in which case Antony would have found the entrance to the passage without any trouble to himself. But when Bill turned his head and talked over the back of the seat, it was probable that the listener would find it necessary to put his head outside in order to hear, and then Antony would be able to discover who it was.

Moreover, if he should venture out of his hiding-place altogether and peep at them over the top of the bank, the fact that Bill was talking over the back of the seat would mislead the watcher into thinking that Antony was still there, sitting on the grass, no doubt, behind the seat, swinging his legs over the side of the ditch.

He walked quickly but very silently along the half length of the bowling-green to the first corner, passed cautiously round and then went even more carefully along the width of it to the second corner. He could hear Bill hard at it, arguing from his knowledge of Mark's character that this, that and the other must have happened, and he smiled appreciatively to himself. Bill was an able assistant. As he approached the second corner, he slowed down and did the last few yards on hands and knees. Then, lying at full length, inch by inch his head went round the corner.

The shed was two or three yards to his left, on the opposite side of the ditch. From where he lay he could see almost entirely inside it. Everything seemed to be as they left it. The bowls box, the lawn-mower, the roller, the open croquet box, the——

"By George!" said Antony to himself, "that's neat."

The lid of the other croquet box was open, too.

Bill was turning round now; his voice became more difficult to hear. "You see what I mean," he was saying. "If Cayley——"

And out of the second croquet box came Cayley's black head.

Antony wanted to shout his applause. It was neat, devilish neat. For a moment he gazed, fascinated, at that wonderful new kind of croquet ball which had appeared so dramatically out of the box, and then reluctantly wriggled himself back. There was nothing to be gained by staying there, and a good deal to be lost, for Bill showed signs of running down. He was beginning to repeat himself rather obviously. As quickly as he could, Antony hurried round the ditch and took up his place at the back of Bill's seat. Then he stood up with a yawn, stretched himself and said carelessly: "Well don't worry yourself about it, Bill, old man. I dare say you're right. You know Mark, and I don't, and that's the difference. Shall we have a game or shall we go to bed?"

Bill looked at him for inspiration, and, receiving it, said: "Oh, just let's have one game, shall we?"

"All right," said Antony.

But Bill was much too excited to take very seriously the game which followed. Antony, on the other hand, seemed to be thinking of nothing but bowls. He played with great deliberation for ten minutes and then announced that he was going to bed. Bill looked at him anxiously.

"It's all right," laughed Antony. "You can talk if you want to. Just let's put 'em away first, though."

THEY made their way down to the shed and while Bill was putting the bowls away Antony tried the lid of the closed croquet box. As he expected, it was locked.

"Now then," said Bill, as they were walking back to the house again, "I'm simply bursting to know. Who was it?"

"Cayley."

"Good Lord! Where?"

"Inside one of the croquet boxes."

"Don't be an ass."

"It's quite true, Bill." He told the other what he had seen.

"But aren't we going to have a look at it?" asked Bill, in great disappointment. "I'm longing to explore. Aren't you?"

"To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow. We shall see Cayley coming along this way directly. Besides, I want to get in from the other end, if I can. I doubt very much if we can do it this end without giving ourselves away. Look, there's Cayley."

They could see him coming along the drive toward them. When they were a little closer, they waved to him and he waved back.

"I wondered where you were," he said, as he got up to them. "I rather thought you might be along this way! What about bed?"

"Bed it is," said Antony.

"We've been playing bowls," added Bill, "and talking, and—and playing bowls. Great night, isn't it?"

But he left the rest of the conversation, as they wandered back to the house, to Antony. He wanted to think. There seemed to be no doubt now that Cayley was a villain. Bill had never been familiar with a villain before. It didn't seem quite fair of Cayley, somehow; he was taking rather a mean advantage of his friends. Lot of funny people there were in the world—funny people with secrets. Look at Tony, that first time he had met him in a tobacconist's shop. Anybody would have thought he was a tobacconist's assistant. And Cayley. Anybody would have thought that Cayley was an ordinary decent sort of person. And Mark. Darn it, one could never be sure of anybody. Now, Robert was different. Everybody had always said that Robert was a shady fellow.

But what on earth had Miss Norris got to do with it?

What had Miss Norris got to do with it? This was a question which Antony had already asked himself that afternoon, and it seemed to him now that he had found the answer. As he lay in bed that night, he reassembled his ideas and looked at them in the new light which the events of the evening threw upon the dark corners in his brain.

Of course it was natural that Cayley should want to get rid of his guests as soon as the tragedy was discovered. He would want this for their own sake as well as for his. But he had been a little too quick about suggesting it and about seeing the suggestion carried out. They had been bustled off as soon as they could be packed. The suggestion that they were in his hands, to go or stay as he wished, could have been left safely to them. As it was, they had been given no alternative, and Miss Norris, who had proposed to catch an after-dinner train at the junction, in the obvious hope that she might have in this way a dramatic cross-examination at the hands of some keen-eyed detective, was encouraged tactfully, but quite firmly, to travel by the earlier train with the others. Antony had felt that Cayley, in the tragedy which had suddenly befallen the house, ought to have been equally indifferent to her presence or absence. But he was not; and Antony assumed from this that Cayley was very much alive to the necessity for her absence.

Why?

Well, that question was not to be answered offhand. But the fact that it was so had made Antony interested in her; and it was for this reason that he had followed up so alertly Bill's casual mention of her in connection with the dressing-up business. He felt that he wanted to know a little more about Miss Norris and the part she had played in The Red House circle. By sheer luck, as it seemed to him, he had stumbled on the answer to his question.

Miss Norris was hurried away because she knew about the secret passage.

The passage, then, had something to do with the mystery of Robert's death. Miss Norris had used it in order to bring off her dramatic appearance as the ghost. Possibly she had discovered it for herself; possibly Mark had revealed it to her secretly one day, never guessing that she would make so unkind a use of it later on; possibly Cayley, having been let into the joke of the dressing-up, had shown her how she could make her appearance on the bowling-green even more mysterious and supernatural. One way or another, she knew about the secret passage. So she must be hurried away.

Why? Because if she stayed and talked she might make some innocent mention of it. And Cayley did not want any mention of it.

Why, again? Obviously because the passage, or even the mere knowledge of its existence, might provide a clue.

"I wonder if Mark's hiding there," thought Antony; and he went to sleep.

**Was Cayley's failure to disclose the secret passage because Mark was hiding in it? "The Red House Murder" will be continued in the October number, out September 15th.**

*England's Greatest Comedian Makes Fun of Himself*

# Double or Quits

*In Which We Have a Piece of Work that May be Called Unique—the Author Deliberately Puts Himself into a Story and—a Successful One*

## By George Robey

*Author of "My Rest Cure," etc.*

MY FRIENDS, Jimmie Baker and Billy, are not what you might call out-and-out bad, but they have a genius for arousing murderous instincts in the breasts of their fellow men. And they are not what you might call downright idiotic; but one can't help hoping, for the good of the race, that their children will take after the mother's side of the family.

Of course, what is really the matter with them is that they are lacking in imagination. It is this complete lack of imagination that makes them fail to realize the way I have to work for my living.

Billy and Jimmie are persuaded that I don't work. Of course, where I made a mistake was in trying to argue with them. I ought to have left them in the condition of ignorance which is natural to them. Instead of which I tried to show to their stolid, unimaginative minds what my work really meant.

Jimmie, if I remember rightly, remarked that the Lord only knew what it meant.

One word led to another, and then Billy said something perfectly foolish about the laboring man and the sweat of his brow.

I assured him that compared to the sweat of my brow the laboring man's was a mere drop in the ocean. Then we had another word or two and in the end I undertook to beat the laboring man at his own job. I pointed out that a man of my initiative and intelligence could do the work of the average working man far better and more successfully than he could.

To prove this, I undertook to earn my living as plain John Robinson for not less than one week at any reasonable occupation Billy and Jimmie chose to name, and I backed my offer with a note of two hundred and fifty pounds.

And that is the history of how I came to spend a short vacation first as a railway porter, then as a rag-and-bone merchant, then as night porter at a famous hotel and, finally, as a waiter at the Restaurant Bellini.

Upon the first three of these experiences I need dwell but briefly, since they themselves were brief.

Of my activities as a railway porter, suffice it to state that, owing to some trifling difference of opinion with the station-master, I found it inconvenient to continue them for the stipulated week. But I unhesitatingly bet my friends double or quits that a distinguished career lay before me in any other branch of manual labor they chose to name. Thus I became a rag-and-bone merchant.

I should have succeeded brilliantly in this profession had it not been for the effect of the hot weather upon a quantity of hare and rabbit skins which, pending disposal, I had stored in the billiard-room. The high-handed action of the sanitary authorities, coupled with the unsympathetic attitude of my family, induced me to relinquish this calling.

Realizing what Jimmie and Billy failed to do, namely, that not lack of ability but force of circumstances was the cause of my apparent failure, I remained undaunted.

Again I offered them double or quits—to wit, one thousand pounds—and challenged them to select for me another calling involving the healthy action of the pores of the skin. They named it and I became night porter at the Magnifique.

Upon the details of my meteoric career at the abode of the Idle Rich I need not dwell. I will content myself with asking, how was I to know that the old gentleman was merely smoking a pipe in bed and that his room was not on fire? My prompt use of the hose might have saved hundreds of valuable lives. But there is no pleasing some people. As might have been expected, Jimmie and Billy also failed to understand.

I QUOTE their remarks—and my replies—verbatim, as showing my friends' peculiar denseness.

"So, you see, George, you've been beaten," said Billy Archer.

"Beaten!" I exclaimed. "How do you make that out?"

"Why, this last stunt of yours, old man, this night porter business; surely that's convinced you?"

"Convinced me of what?"

"Why, that you're absolutely incapable of earning an honest living," chimed in Jimmie. "The sweat of your brow doesn't stand an earthly. It's market value is simply nil."

"Not at all," I retorted. "I am not at all convinced. I have had a phenomenal run of ill luck, that's all. But I am not yet beaten—far from it. Wait and see. I have still another week's holiday to run. In that week I am going to make good. Double or quits that I make good."

"George, you fool—two thousand pounds," said Billy. "You're going to lose it."

"I am willing to risk it. Do you take me?"

"It's sheer lunacy," said Billy. "But, of course, if you enjoy chucking away a couple of thousand, Jimmie and I aren't going to stand in your way, eh, Jimmie?"

"I'm not sure," replied Jimmie. "I'm an honest man and I'm not sure that I can reconcile it with my conscience. George is such a hopeless idiot, it's like robbing the widow and the fatherless."

"Well, if he chooses to keep on being an idiot, it's his lookout," remarked Billy. "He evidently likes losing money, positively revels in it, so you and I might as well reap the benefit as anybody."

"What do you propose to do now, George?" demanded Jimmie.

"That I am, as usual, prepared to leave to you," I said with superb indifference. "Name any kind of work you like. I am not afraid."

Billy and Jimmie looked inquiringly at one another.

"Bricklayer? Miner? Engine-driver?" murmured Jimmie. "All skilled labor. No good."

"Bartender?" suggested Billy, inspired by his environment.

Jimmie shook his head.

"Hardly fair," he said. "The temptation—" he glanced at me kindly. "With *his* nature—no, old chap, it might be his downfall."

"Ha!" cried Billy. "Downfall! That's given me an idea. Downfall—drunken brawl—police. A policeman! Why not a policeman?"

Again Jimmie shook his head.

"He couldn't pass the entrance exam. They're very strict. The spelling alone——"

"P'raps you're right. Something easier. We don't want to be too hard on him."

Jimmie thought for a moment.

"Suppose we leave it to chance," he said suddenly. "Suppose we agree that he takes the first job that comes along in the course of to-day? The first *reasonable* job, of course."

"Right!" said Billy. "Are you game, George?"

"Perfectly," I replied. "Come and lunch with me, and then we'll have a look around."

"Sorry, old chap," said Jimmie. "Can't lunch with you. Promised to feed at a God-forsaken hole in the city. Beastly place, run by our parlor-maid's brother."

"*Beastly* place, did you say?"

"Yes—cooking vile—attendance damnable—surroundings poisonous——"

"Yet you go there?"

Jimmie nodded.

"She's an excellent parlor-maid," he said. "My wife doesn't want to lose her."

"What!" I exclaimed. "You go to a place you detest—you ruin your digestion and your temper—oh, yes, I've noticed it—you put money in the pocket of an undeserving person—because your parlor-maid threatens to leave if you don't! Why, it's blackmail!"

"Exactly," interjected Billy. "The sort of blackmail we all of us pay in some form or another. You may choose your restaurant, George, but every time you tip the waiter you're paying blackmail."

"Hah!" I said. "No doubt you're right; but wait a minute. I've got an idea! A waiter! That's what I'll be. A waiter at this beastly restaurant of yours. You can get me the job, of course?"

"I dare say," said Jimmie.

"Blackmail in another form!" remarked Billy. "Jimmie eats the parlor-maid's brother's filthy food for fear of what the parlor-maid may do and the parlor-maid's brother puts up with George as a waiter for fear of what Jimmie may do. It's a vicious circle."

"I beg your pardon," I said, with acerbity, "it will not be a question of 'putting up' with me. I am not undertaking this job lightly. I am not approaching my task, simple though it be, in a spirit of levity. I intend to work hard. I intend to give every satisfaction. Nay, more. Say the attendance is bad. I shall remedy that. By my example to the other waiters, I shall speed up the service."

"Oh," said Jimmie.

I ignored the interruption and continued as though no one had spoken.

"You tell me the cooking is vile. Very well. I shall have a heart-to-heart talk with the chef. I shall give him some useful hints. I have one or two little recipes he will be glad of. These will help to raise the tone of the place."

"Bless your innocent heart!" said Jimmie.

Billy gave one of his ridiculous guffaws.

"Raise the place!" he exclaimed. "Raise Cain, more likely. Boss the waiters and interfere with the chef! Good lord, man—" He turned and shook Jimmie by the hand. "Congratulations, my dear boy," he said. "That two thousand is as good as ours already."

"Not quite, however," I remarked in the quiet way which is so effective. "Come, take me to the Restaurant of the Brother of the Parlor-maid."

SIGNOR GIORGIO BELLINI, the proprietor of the Restaurant Bellini, was not aggressively Italian either in appearance or temperament. But he spoke English with a charming Italian accent that changed to pure cockney only in moments of unusual excitement.

At such moments one might be tempted to believe the rumor that his name was in reality George Bell, and that he was born in Whitechapel of worthy and all-British parents.

But this is by the way. Signor Bellini's nationality is of comparatively small importance to this narrative. Whether Rome, Naples or Stratford-atte-Bowe had been his birthplace, my career at the Restaurant Bellini would still have been what it was.

I had barely been inside the place ten minutes before I realized that Jimmie had but spoken the plain truth. The cooking of the Restaurant Bellini was vile indeed, the waiting execrable, the whole place insufferable.

But *I* was not depressed. The worse the place, I reflected, the more room for improvement and me.

My spirits rose as I realized how wide was the scope for my talent; to reform the Restaurant Bellini, to lift it from a rank failure into a brilliant success, was certainly a task requiring more than ordinary ability.

I made up my mind to accomplish that task, to strain every nerve, to leave no stone unturned.

At the very outset I was struck by the lackadaisical manner in which the waiters waited. They seemed to think that because the place was half-empty, there was no need for them to hurry.

I particularly noticed that, however disengaged they might be, they invariably kept every customer waiting and seemed to make it a point of honor on no account to produce the food until the guest had given up all hope of seeing it that day.

Being essentially a tactful person, I did not point out their shortcomings to them in so many words. I determined to effect my reforms silently but insidiously, by sheer force of example. By seeing me wait, they would, by degrees, learn how to wait themselves.

There were three of us in all; Ernesto, the head waiter, Alberto and myself.

I had been introduced by Jimmie as John Robinson, but had been immediately Italianized into "Paolo" by Signor Bellini, no doubt in order to keep up the southern atmosphere of the establishment.

I liked being called Paolo. There was a

suggestion of recklessness, of mystery and adventure about the appellation: something exotic, as it were. I began to feel intensely Italian.

I was pleased to observe from the outset that Ernesto and Alberto were struck with my method of waiting. True, it seemed to amuse them, for they grinned and whispered together a good deal, and once or twice as they watched me, they laughed audibly. But this did not trouble me. I reflected that the moment they realized the effect of my behavior upon the customers their amusement would turn to admiration and envy.

"You-a get-ta da heart-a diseas-a if-a you-a run about lik-a this-a," said Ernesto.

I explained that I was not afraid of my heart, and that my object in running instead of walking was to serve customers as expeditiously as possible.

"Men hate to be kept waiting for their food," I reminded him.

Ernesto smiled an inscrutable smile. Then he spoke. "In da Restaurante Bellini," he said, "eet ees best-a to keep-a dem waiting for-a food-a da longest possible."

"But why?" I demanded.

Again Ernesto smiled.

"To wait-a," he said, "eet-a mak-a dem very hongry. Et ees only a very hongry man, who-a can eat-a da food-a of da Ristorante Bellini."

I have repeated this little conversation with Ernesto verbatim because it shows so clearly the shocking state of affairs at the Restaurant Bellini.

I made up my mind that things should not go on in this way. I should have to strike at the root of the matter. At the earliest opportunity, I would speak to the chef. I would bring all my tact to bear upon him.

MY OPPORTUNITY came sooner than I could possibly have hoped for—on the very evening of my début at Bellini's.

It was the Signor himself who dispatched me to the kitchen in order to find out what had become of a *poulet à l'Italien* which, even on Ernesto's system of reasoning, had been overlong delayed.

The chef was a fattish man with a largish, whitish, dampish face and extraordinarily dirty hands.

He was engaged in the act of separating fragments of the *poulet* from fragments of broken casserole scattered over the kitchen floor with the help of the *sous-chef*, a lad of tender years who, judging from the language addressed to him by his chief, appeared to have been the cause of the accident.

Having collected it in a fresh casserole, together with as much of the liquor as could be scooped up from the floor, the chef bore the casserole to the sink, turned the hot tap upon the poulet to make good the deficiency of gravy, and popped the dish back into his oven.

Then he turned to me. A little curtly he demanded my business. I explained. He remarked that the dratted old hen would be hot in two ticks.

I wondered whether two ticks would be long enough for me to sow the seeds of reform in the chef's mind. I determined to try.

With my usual quickness of perception, I felt that I would have to be very circumspect, very tactful with this man.

"Yours must be an interesting profession," I began.

"It's a bleeding profession," said the chef.

I saw my opportunity. "But don't you think," I suggested pleasantly, "that a knowledge of cooking might make things easier for you?"

It was said in the most inoffensive manner. I smiled as I spoke. Yet the chef, for some reason, seemed annoyed. His face became suddenly mottled, and he made a gesture with the fish-slice which I took to signify displeasure.

As I was wiping a portion of boiled cod from my face, Ernesto came into the kitchen.

With truly Southern intuition he realized that there was something wrong.

He assisted me in reclaiming the piece of fish that had lodged in my right ear, then drew the chef aside and said a few words to him in a low voice.

The words must have been well chosen. Their effect upon the chef was magical.

He burst into a hearty laugh, then came and shook me by the hand.

"Sorrow, sorrow," he said. "I might 'a' know'd it was a joke by yer face. Don't mind me. I'm an 'ot-tempered man but soon over. Allow me—" he picked a portion of cod that had escaped my attention from the middle of my boiled shirt—

"Waste not, want not's my motto."

So saying he threw the fragment to the *sous-chef*, engaged in the occupation of scraping the remains from the dirty plate into the stock-pot.

I was glad that events had taken such a pleasant turn. True it was a little disconcerting to have my remarks treated as a joke. But I hoped that by-and-by, when the chef thought it over, he would recognize the fact that there is a germ of truth in every joke. I therefore did not correct the impression created by Ernesto. I was confident that already I had sown a tiny seed of reform in the chef's breast.

For a moment I wondered whether I might venture upon a second "joke" relative to the condition of the chef's hands.

While I still hesitated, Ernesto spoke. He must have followed the direction of my eyes and read my thoughts.

"Hees hands are-a black-a, yes," he remarked. "Eet ees because he has not yet mada da pastry."

"I beg your pardon?" I murmured.

"Always after-a he has mad-a da pastry," said Ernesto, "da hands of da chef-a are-a white as-a snow."

I LEFT the kitchen a little hurriedly. Clearly, there was much to be done.

I will pass over the unimportant details of my first day at the Restaurant Bellini and confine myself to those outstanding incidents only, which will prove to the intelligent reader how much may be accomplished even in a few hours, by earnest endeavor coupled with enthusiasm; and how a sympathetic personality and pleasing mode of address may conquer the disabilities of inexperience.

No one can become a perfect waiter in a single day. It was natural that I should have a few accidents, the result of inexperience.

The old gentleman had been waiting a long time for his soup. He did not realize that this was not my fault, but the fault of the chef. He was becoming seriously ruffled. So seriously that Signor Bellini noticed it and demanded to know what was wrong.

I explained. Signor Bellini hurried across to his infuriated guest and poured apologies upon him with his beautiful Italian accent. Soft liquids and rich vowels flowed from the tongue of Signor Bellini in a honeyed stream. Then he rushed toward the lift.

"Blast his ruddy soup!" he muttered in excellent English, as he snatched the speaking-tube from my hand.

At that moment the lift began to rumble, the soup was ascending.

I pounced upon it, losing not a moment. On winged feet, I conveyed it toward the waiting guest.

"Your soup at last, sir!" I cried, joyfully. "Nice and hot, sir!"

With these words my foot slipped upon a piece of fat and the soup slipped down the old gentleman's neck.

He had asked for it hot—and he had got it, alas!

This was a pure accident—I explained as much as I poured a bottle of salad oil upon the scalded parts.

At first the old gentleman refused to accept my apologies. There was quite a scene.

I could not help reflecting that if we all went to where people are always telling us to go, the place would be hopelessly overcrowded. Therefore I disobeyed the old gentleman. I retired instead to the further end of the room.

Signor Bellini, Ernesto, Alberto and most of the diners gathered round the old gentleman and said things. They mostly talked all at once and from my end of the room I could not hear what they said. But I felt they were talking about me, from the way first one and then another kept on turning round and staring at me.

To my surprise, there was a good deal of laughter. So this incident also, was, somehow, being turned into a joke.

I hoped the old gentleman would be made to see the point. Doubtless he would then forgive me. Personally, I saw nothing to laugh at in this unlucky accident, and I did not see how the poor old gentleman could be expected to laugh. I was amazed to discover that he did. He joined in the laughter quite heartily, and as he retired to put on a dry shirt of Signor Bellini's, he stopped in front of me for a moment to remark, in a most friendly fashion:

"I've enjoyed that soup, waiter. I'll have another plateful!"

From that moment the guests seemed to take me to their hearts. For some reason, I had amused them. And they were grateful to me.

Such was the atmosphere of jollity and good humor I had created that when one of them, wishing to attract my attention, merely called out "Waiter!" there were shouts of laughter.

"Waiter," said this young man to me as I flew to his table. "Can you recommend the fish to-day?"

IT WAS then I realized how seriously handicapped I was in my present employment owing to a certain peculiarity of mine which I have already had occasion to refer to, namely, my constitutional inability to tell an untruth. George Washington himself was not more heavily handicapped than I.

Asked therefore, whether I would recommend the fish, what was I to reply?

I felt myself paling perceptibly. Yet I did not waver. There was only one reply that I could make and I made it.

"The fish is filthy," I said.

"Ha! ha!" cried my interlocutor. "Then bring me a double portion. Ha! Ha!"

He turned to an elderly man in a check suit seated at the next table.

"He says the fish is filthy!" he called out to him. The person addressed laughed loudly and repeated, "He says the fish is filthy! Ha! Ha!" to his vis-à-vis.

The vis-à-vis was slightly deaf.

"What say?" he inquired, his hand to his ear.

The other leaned across the table.

"He says the fish is filthy!" He bawled into the deaf one's ear so that the whole dining-room heard him.

One and all they roared with laughter.

Ernesto and Alberto laughed till the tears rolled down their cheeks. Only Signor Bellini seemed not quite pleased. But he made no comment.

After that, there was quite a run on the fish. Presently, I heard a youth in glasses, who was with a lady friend, remark:

"There's many a true word spoken in jest. What do you say to the ontray, Lil?"

Something compelled me to do it. She looked a nice girl, and I had seen the entrée. Before she had time to answer, I took up the word.

"Believe me," I warned her, "the less you say to the entrée the better."

Again this simple statement was regarded as a sally. Lil and her friend burst out laughing.

"All right, then," said Lil, "we'd better have a cut off the joint, eh, Fred?"

"Right-o," cried Fred. "Unless he's going to tell us the joint's poisoned!"

At that the two laughed very heartily once more. A swift struggle took place in my mind. Ought I to tell these two that the description of the joint as "sirloin of beef" upon the menu was in all probability a euphemism for something more equestrian?

But, after all, they were not asking me to *name* the joint.

"No," I said, hesitating over this point of conscience, "I don't think the joint is exactly poisoned."

"Isn't he a yell?" inquired Lil, and the man in the check suit came across to their table and begged to be told what I said.

"He says the less you 'ave to say to the ontray the better, but he don't think the joint's poisoned!" cried the youth, and tears began to roll down his cheeks.

The man in check laughed uproariously and shouted at his deaf companion:

"The less you 'ave to say to the ontray the better, and the joint ain't poisoned!"

The whole restaurant heard him and rocked with laughter.

I looked uneasily in the direction of Signor Bellini. To my relief I saw that his face, too, was wreathed in smiles.

He was chatting to the old gentleman who had had the unfortunate accident with the soup and who had now arrived safely at the cheese-and-celery end of a hearty meal.

Signor Bellini beckoned to me as he caught my eye.

"The Signor Samuelson he wish-a to come here every day," he said, regarding me with a benevolent expression. "You-a will please reserve this tabelle for-a him, Paolo."

"Paolo!" cried Mr. Samuelson. "Ha! Ha! Paolo!" The name appeared to amuse him exceedingly. "I'll be bringing along a couple of friends to-morrow. But, mind, I want to be waited on by Paolo!"

"Yes, yes, all-a right-a, eet shall be Paolo, Signor," cried Bellini, bowing and beaming.

So I had won the old man's heart. The affair of the soup, instead of alienating, had drawn us closer together. Sometimes it happens so: some little contretemps—some slight annoyance—a few words—apologies—forgiveness—eternal friendship.

I was pleased. I was touched.

When late that same night, my labors ended, I reviewed the incidents of the day, I could not repress a feeling of mild elation.

Modest as I am, I was yet unable to blind myself to the fact that, on my very first day I had achieved a measure of popularity with the patrons of the Restaurant Bellini far surpassing that of Ernesto or Alberto, and which Signor Bellini himself had not been slow to recognize.

I was being appreciated. There could be no doubt of that. I had clicked.

I AM not given to boasting. Therefore I said little to my wife and nothing at all to Jimmie and Billy of the remarkable impression I had created.

This time I had insisted on Jimmie and Billy giving their word of honor not to go near the Restaurant Bellini until the end of the week, as their presence invariably irritated me and put me off my stroke, as it were. They had brought me nothing but ill-luck so far, and I determined to keep them away from Bellini's until my success was assured.

But the two were waiting for me when I got home that night.

With characteristic brutality, Jimmie inquired whether I had got the sack.

"On the contrary," I replied succinctly.

"What!" exclaimed Billie. "You mean to say they're letting you stop another day?"

I merely inclined my head. Their disappointment was disgusting.

"Ah, well, the week is yet young," Billy remarked. To that I condescended no reply whatever. They bade me "good night," obviously chagrined.

My second day at Bellini's I can only describe as a gratifying revelation.

Lunch-time was, more or less, a repetition of dinner-time the night before. The place was considerably fuller; that was all. Ernesto and Alberto assured me that they had never seen so many customers since the opening day.

I was kept busy. To be frank, I was overworked. Unlike Ernesto and Alberto, I never got a minute's rest.

Ernesto and Alberto were frequently unemployed. Their tables were at times quite empty, while those allotted to me were nearly always full.

From this circumstance, even *I*, diffident as I am, could draw but one conclusion: I was sought after, Ernesto and Alberto were not.

I was a little sorry for those two. I was afraid they might feel hurt. All these people showed their preference so plainly.

But Ernesto and Alberto did not seem to mind. On the contrary, they seemed positively to enjoy my popularity. During their idle moments they watched me at my work, grinning good-naturedly and without a trace of jealousy.

I concluded that either their characters were extraordinarily beautiful or else they were lazy and preferred less kudos because it meant less work.

Once more, as on the previous day, I found that my passion for the truth, so far from being a drawback, seemed to be my best friend.

Thus, when some one asked, "Waiter, what is there fit to eat to-day?" and I replied, truthfully, "Nothing, sir," I noticed that everybody laughed heartily and swallowed the inedibles without a murmur.

On that same day I had another striking instance of how a simple statement of the truth will disarm criticism.

I had served a pleasant-faced elderly gentleman with a plate of stewed prunes and was turning away to attend to a customer at the next table when the other called me back.

His voice was agitated. His face was a shade less pleasant than of yore.

He pointed an accusing finger at the prunes.

"Waiter," he said, "what is this beetle doing here?"

I looked at the beetle.

"It's doing nothing, sir," I replied gently. "I'm afraid the poor thing is dead."

Then I explained.

"That's the worst of stewed prunes and the chef being so short-sighted," I said. "He told me he'd picked them all out, but he evidently overlooked that one. It's a thousand pities he doesn't wear glasses."

The customer gazed at me for a few moments, then his face became pleasant once more.

"Take those prunes away and bring me a blanc-mange," he said, with a chuckle.

I discovered that my perfect frankness stood me in good stead in another direction.

Overworked — I might almost say driven—as I was, it was, of course, impossible for me to remember every time exactly what each particular customer had ordered. Sometimes, therefore, I made mistakes.

For instance, I recollect supplying a lady who had ordered steak-and-kidney pudding with a jam roly-poly. She called my attention to the circumstance. The problem then was to find out who had ordered the roly-poly and where the steak-and-kidney pudding had got to.

In such a case, I found the best plan was to rap upon a table with the handle of a knife and to inquire, loudly and fearlessly, whether any lady or gentleman present was, at the moment, eating steak-and-kidney pudding in mistake for roly-poly. Thus the mystery would generally be cleared up in the quickest and simplest manner.

At dinner-time that day the Restaurant Bellini, instead of being three parts empty, was very nearly full.

Mr. Samuelson arrived with his party of friends. So did all the other guests of the night before, with *their* friends.

For the sake of Ernesto and Alberto I wished that our guests did not show their preference quite so unmistakably. One and all, they expressed a desire to be waited on by me. Really, it was embarrassing to a modest man.

Signor Bellini bowed, beamed and gesticulated in his most Italian manner, and when every one of my tables was full, he apologized volubly to those who had to be satisfied with Ernesto or Alberto.

I was struck afresh by the attitude of the two latter. Obviously they did not in the least resent my phenomenal success. They encouraged it in all sorts of ways. As when Alberto came to me and whispered:

"The old cheese in the purple bonnet's worrying me to death. She wouldn't be 'appy till I'd promised 'er you should bring 'er 'er corfey. And if you could manage to spill it down the front of 'er dress, I dare say she'd be in the seventh 'eaven!"

Discounting Alberto's little joke, I readily agreed to serve the dear old soul. I was glad I did when I saw how delighted she was.

After that, Ernesto and Alberto constantly came to me with similar requests.

My success as a waiter was established. I had arrived.

ON THE third day, both at lunch and dinner-time, the Restaurant Bellini was packed to suffocation.

There was no doubt in any one's mind that it was I who was responsible for this, I who was making Bellini's popular as it had never been before. And everything I did seemed right. I could do no wrong. It became clear to me that I was the ideal waiter the world had been looking for.

With my customary diffidence, I was not quite sure why this should be so. I only knew it was so.

I told myself that there had been waiters, I myself knew of several, who were almost as efficient as myself, so far as mere efficiency goes. Yet they did not *make* a restaurant as I was making this one. They did not count as I counted.

It seemed probable, then, that I possessed something over and above what these others possessed, some indefinable quality, some *je ne sais quoi*—at any rate, there it was.

Of course I could not help realizing *one* factor of my marvelous popularity, viz., the keen personal interest I took in every individual customer, the disinterested advice I gave them.

As I have already mentioned, I always gave them my real opinion of the food. Whenever it happened to be atrociously bad, I said so.

But I went further. Whenever customers ordered meals for which they were obviously unsuited, I said so. For example, to the lady of twenty stone who was eating cream with apple-pudding, I remarked, quite casually:

"Madam, it is an interesting physiological and chemical fact, of which you are no doubt unaware, that suet, flour and cream are the most potent manufacturers of adipose tissue in the world."

Thus, I did not presume to dictate to her. But, by the mere power of suggestion, I put her on the right track, as it were. If she chose to ignore the warning, her doom would be upon her own head; I had done my duty.

Similarly, to the chronic dyspeptic with the glazed nose who had dined at Bellini's for three nights running, I said in quite a friendly way:

"Don't you think, sir, you are coming here a little too frequently for the good of your health? May I venture to suggest, sir, that avoidance of the Restaurant Bellini for a few weeks, together with sips of hot water between meals, would soon reduce your nose to the normal?"

Undoubtedly these proofs of personal interest augmented my reputation.

On the fourth day Signor Bellini was obliged to close the doors and introduce the queue system to enable us to cope with the rush. He also engaged two more waiters and a second assistant cook.

On the fifth day the queue had grown to such a length that it had to be regulated by the police, and Signor Bellini hired a dozen extra tables.

ON THE sixth day the crowds that besieged the place were quite unqueueable. It became obvious that at least two-thirds of them would have to be turned away unfed.

The police appealed to Signor Bellini to announce the fact to the waiting multitude and dismiss those who would eventually be doomed to disappointment.

Signor Bellini departed in order to address the crowd from the balcony of an upper room. He returned, after a brief interval, looking a little scared.

His eye sought mine, appealingly, it seemed to me.

"They're calling for *you*," he said. "They refuse to go till you've come out and made a speech."

Truly it was bewildering, overwhelming, this popularity of mine.

I followed Signor Bellini on to the balcony.

At sight of us the crowd cheered.

There were cries of "Bravo Bellini! Good old George!" And it flashed across my mind that my employer's innocent deception was common knowledge; beneath the "Georgio" they had discovered George,

"Come on, George!" shouted some one "Come and tell us all about it!"

"Speech! Speech!" yelled the crowd.

"You're in for it, sir," said Bellini.

I turned to him in bewilderment.

"But it's *you* they're calling!"

"Me? Not a bit of it. It's *George Robey* they're calling!"

I stared at him in amazement.

"How—how do they know? How do *you* know?"

"Never mind that now, sir," cried Bellini excitedly. "For Gawd's sake, say something and send this crowd away, or the police'll be down on me."

At this wholly unforeseen turn of events I hesitated for a moment. But only for a moment. Then I rose to the occasion and addressed the crowd.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I began, and a hush fell over the assembly. "Since you appear to know it, I will not conceal from you who I am." (Cries of "Bravo!" and "Hear! Hear!") "Neither will I conceal from you the object of my present occupation," I continued. (Cries of "A bet! To win a bet, eh, George?")

"Yes, a bet!" I told them in clarion accents. "But not one lightly or heedlessly undertaken. This is a serious bet. No, my friends," I continued earnestly, "I beg you not to laugh. This is a solemn and serious bet, undertaken with a solemn and serious purpose."

My voice trembled a little with suppressed emotion as I warmed to my task. The listening multitude had not yet grasped the full significance of my words. Their attitude continued to be jocular. But soon they would understand. In a few trenchant phrases, I would make everything clear to them. They would cease to laugh.

"The solemn and serious purpose I am speaking of," I cried, as soon as the laughter had subsided, "is the purpose of vindicating in my own person a grave charge that has been leveled against the ancient and honorable profession which writers in the Provincial and Sunday press have occasionally been kind enough to say I adorn!"

Apparently I had not yet caught the right note. Symptoms of thoughtless mirth continued to break out here and there among the crowd. I determined to try a more matter-of-fact tone.

"The apparent ease and insouciance of stage life," I said, as soon as I could hear myself speak, "have exposed my profession to the charge of frivolity."

I then went on to describe, in a few graphic words, what had passed between

Jimmie and Billy and myself, and our subsequent line of conduct.

I passed briefly over the comparatively negligible episodes preceding my advent at Bellini's, then proceeded to dwell at some length upon the gratifying experience of the last six days.

With pardonable pride I described my methods as a waiter, and the success I had achieved. I regret to have to record it, but there was no cessation of mirth. I was forced to the reluctant conclusion that in every crowd there is a light-minded element that seeks facile amusement in everything, even the most serious matters.

This light-minded element it was that laughed. It laughed so noisily that the sober-minded majority had no chance.

The mirth of the empty-headed continued to ring out even after a posse of mounted police had begun to scatter the crowd.

IT WAS still ringing out when some one seized me from behind and dragged me away from the balcony.

Inside the room, I found myself face to face with Jimmie and Billy.

They, too, were giving way to mirth. So was Signor Bellini.

I confronted Jimmie and Billie sternly.

"So you broke your word," I said. "You betrayed me."

"Not at all!" they cried in one breath.

"We never said a word," declared Billie.

"It wasn't necessary," Jimmie jerked his head in the direction of Giorgio Bellini. "He knew it all the time, it seems. Ernesto spotted you directly; at least, he suspected you, and directly afterward you gave yourself away."

"How?"

"Don't you remember? You dropped a handkerchief," said Billy, "and Ernesto found it."

"Ah!"

"It was marked 'G. R.!' Ernesto knew you weren't the king, and there you are!"

"Well, at any rate, I have won my bet," I remarked, after a brief moment of annoyance.

"You mean you've lost it!" cried Jimmie and Billy as one man.

"What!" I exclaimed. "Can you deny me my success—I might without exaggeration call it my triumph—here at the Restaurant Bellini?"

"Your success as *what?*" cried Billy. "As a music hall comedian—as George Robey playing the fool—yes! But as a waiter—no!" shouted Jimmie.

"What do you mean?"

"We mean," said Jimmie, "that if you'd been an ordinary unknown waiter, Signor Bellini would have sacked you on your very first day."

I turned indignantly to Giorgio Bellini:

"What do you say to that?"

He shrugged his shoulders in an Italian manner, then relapsed into his native dialect:

"Since you asks me, as man to man, Mr. Robey, I answers, as man to man, wot do *you* think? As a waiter, Mr. Robey, sir, 'ow 'ave you be'aved? You've insulted me an' my restaurant; you've insulted the cook, you've insulted the food in front of my customers' faces, you asked 'em to stay away as I 'eard you with me own ears, you've gone and poured liquids down their backs an' solids down their fronts, you've made 'orrible personal remarks to ladies about their tissues and everybody knows 'ow sensitive ladies are over that sort o' thing, and you've mixed up the roly-polys with the steak-and-kidneys something crool. Mr. Robey, sir, I asks you straight, would any of us 'ave stood it from a waiter if Ernesto 'adn't tipped us the wink?"

The silence that followed Signor Bellini's outburst was painful. I admit that it was painful. I felt it. I think that Signor Bellini felt it, too, for he spoke again, hastily:

"Not that it's for *me* to grumble, Mr. Robey," he said. "It's been a splendid advertisement for the place, as any one can see, and we've all thoroughly enjoyed it. I'm much obliged to you, sir."

"Not at all," I murmured.

"I suppose," Giorgio Bellini went on hesitatingly, "you couldn't see your way to stopping another week, sir?"

"Impossible," I replied gently. "Unfortunately, I am obliged, in a short space of time, to earn a large sum of money. In fact, two thousand pounds."

# The Green Goddess

*Every Month* EVERYBODY'S *Publishes an Adaption of Some Popular Play. This Month it is a Stirring Melodrama of India—a Play Which Shows How Modern Ingenuity Outwits the Wisdom of the Ages*

## By William Archer

*Published by courtesy of the author and of the producer, Winthrop Ames*

IN REMOTE regions of the Himalaya Mountains there are people who still bow down to strange gods and goddesses, still look upon them as oracles, and still are ready to do the bloody mandates of their will. In their hearts these folk harbor inherited hatred of western civilization. Years pass over them and they know nothing of and care nothing for the ways of the world. Should it happen that their Raja express the ambition to attend an English university, these folk humor his whim. But no matter how modern he may be on his return, he must yield to the ancestral customs, on the strict observance of which his rule and power depend.

No wonder, therefore, that the falling of a crumpled airplane in a rocky gorge, encircled by snow-peaked mountains, should cause consternation among the people of Rukh. The accident has happened outside a rock-cut temple, on the altar of which five newly severed heads of goats are laid. For an instant the strange bird hovers above them, then suddenly it stops its whirring noise and slowly falls to earth. By some miracle the two men and one woman held by its wings are landed safely, none the worse physically for the wreck. Here, in the shadow of the Green Goddess, *Antony Crespin* and his wife, *Lucilla*, find themselves with *Dr. Traherne*, the owner of the machine. They have no idea where they are; they only see some startled natives, who have already sent for their Raja Sahib and in the distance they catch glimpses of a palatial building with minarets and towers—an imposing structure for so wild a place.

*Crespin's* first endeavor has been, in every conceivable twist of Hindustani, to find out where their plane has hit. The only thing he can draw from the natives is that they are in the land sacred to the Green Goddess, and that it was she who beckoned the flying-ship out of the skies. Then *Traherne* tries his Russian, and at last grasps at the word "Rukh."

CRESPIN: What the deuce is he Rooking about?

LUCILLA: Oh, I think I know. Wait a minute. (*She slips off her flying-coat, takes a newspaper from the inner pocket, and tosses the coat on a stone near by. Then she looks for a paragraph in the paper. She hands it to* TRAHERNE.) Read that.

TRAHERNE (*reads*): "It appears that the three men yesterday sentenced to death for the assassination of Mr. Haredale, political officer at Abdulabad, are natives of Rukh, a small and little-known independent state in the depths of the Himalayas." This sentence on three of their tribesmen isn't exactly the best passport for us. (*Tears out the item and hands the newspaper back to* LUCILLA, *who replaces it in the pocket of her coat.* TRAHERNE *makes a rough spill of the clipping, sets fire to it with a match, lights his cigarette at the flame, and treads out the ashes on the ground.*)

Here, then, is the undercurrent of suspense in which "The Green Goddess" begins. But there are other problems with which these three have to cope. First, they have innocently desecrated holy ground, and the natives hate them for that. And, among themselves, there is not much accord; three can run the gamut of emotion, especially if one of them be an attractive woman, whose relations with her husband are maintained merely by the fact that she has two children at home, but whose respect for him has totally disappeared. Even under the present circumstances, *Crespin*, overbearing as a husband and blustering as a major in his Majesty's Indian Service, is scarcely one to use diplomacy toward the man who he rightly feels is in love with his wife, or toward the *Raja*, who, to judge by the murmur of crowds, is on his way in state to greet his unexpected visitors. Already has *Crespin* resented *Traherne's* attentions to his wife. "We had better be careful not to tread on the corns of these people," *Traherne* had said. "We have Mrs. Crespin to think of." To which *Crespin* has replied tartly: "Damn it, sir, do you think I don't know how to take care of my own wife?"

They are interrupted by the arrival of the *Raja* in a procession of regal splendor—priests, sedate villagers, barbarous warriors, with musicians playing and negroes dancing and chanting around the *Raja's* litter. It is all much more barbaric than the *Raja* himself, who has suave European manners and an uncanny way of divining one's inner thoughts. *Lucilla* is the first English woman who has penetrated into his territory, and a very charming picture she is, says the *Raja*. He greets the major by his proper rank, he knows of *Traherne*, acknowledged by the medical world as the "Pasteur of Malaria." He is even posted on what the paragraph contains which has been clipped from the newspaper—an act seen by the priests of the temple and reported to his Highness. To add to his modernness, the *Raja* has an English butler, a slave of his lamp—and to judge by his shifty eye, an outlawed criminal.

RAJA: You have made a sensation here, I can assure you. My people have never seen an airplane. They are not sure whether you are gods or demons. But the fact of your having descended in the precincts of a temple of our local goddess (*with a wave of his hand toward the idol*)—allow me to introduce you to her—is considered highly significant.

The *Raja* has inordinate pride of race, but he also has politeness to see that his visitors are made comfortable; he sends for a litter for madam and orders gowns laid out for her evening attire. Evidently the *Raja* is a lady's-man, for *Watkins*, the butler, knows his every desire, especially toward *Lucilla*. There is no telling what *Watkins* knows.

The major is surprised to find, in this out-of-the-way place, such civility, such ceremony. But for him the *Raja's* bodyguard is a little obsolete, to say the least.

RAJA: I cling to the fashions of my fathers—and my people would be restive if I didn't. I maintain these fellows, as his Majesty the King-Emperor keeps up the beefeaters in the Tower. But I also like to move with the times, as perhaps you will allow me to show you. (*He blows one sharp blast on a silver whistle hanging round his neck. Instantly regular troops appear, standing at attention.*)

CRESPIN: Good Lord!

For the first time, perhaps, the major realizes that if trouble were to occur over their departure, the *Raja* would be at some advantage. In fact, the very way in which he detects the absence of the telegraphic report in the newspaper gives all three a start.

RAJA (*suavely*): Ah, you destroyed it out of consideration for my feelings, wishing to spare me a painful piece of intelligence. That was very thoughtful but quite unnecessary. I already know what you tried to conceal.

CRESPIN: You know——!

RAJA: I know that three of my subjects, accused of a political crime, have been sentenced to death.

TRAHERNE: How is it possible——?

RAJA: Bad news flies fast, Doctor Traherne. But one thing you can perhaps tell me—is there any chance of their sentence being remitted?

TRAHERNE: I am afraid not, your Highness.

CRESPIN: Remitted? I should rather say not. It was a cold-blooded, unprovoked murder.

RAJA: Unprovoked, you think? Well, I won't argue with you, Major. And the execution is to be——?

TRAHERNE: I think to-morrow—or the day after. . . Does your Highness know anything of these men?

**Raja** (*over his shoulder, as he assists* **Lucilla** *into her litter*): Know them? Oh, yes—they are my brothers.

With this piece of intelligence they leave for the *Raja's* palace, not under encouraging circumstances, for they hear the crowds shouting anathema on them and their machine, and the sinister smile of the *Raja* has a cold cruelty lurking behind it.

But at dinner that evening *Traherne* and *Crespin* are met with all the comfort of a London club. They have had their tub—to an Englishman that means the height of civilization—and the ayah has clothed Madam in one of the latest Parisian frocks—not one of the risqué ones to please the *Raja's* taste, but a simple one more in accord with *Lucilla's* own desire.

All this formal decorum only heightens the quandary they are in. Among themselves they exchange their impressions, *Traherne* and *Crespin* still at odds over the right to protect *Lucilla*. In the meantime the table is being set by a retinue of servants—a luxurious banquet on the loggia—and the eager eye of the major detects the presence of "Perrier Jouet 1906" in ample supply. Even here the Green Goddess, with her many arms, occupies a place on the mantelpiece. *Traherne* knows that Rukh is on the way to Bokhara, and he also knows that the place breeds a peculiar type of fanatic; the three men whom the *Raja* called his brothers are a sample.

The presence of *Watkins* suggests to the two men that they might as well question him, but all that they can glean from him is that they are as aloof from communication as any stranded people could be. Of their host they are told that he has been many times a father—fifteen sons, with daughters that have not been counted! Morals at Rukh are strange, and *Watkins* has himself fallen under the spell! Indeed, this man gives them a queer sensation, and *Lucilla*, when she talks with him, seems to have seen him somewhere in the past. The fact is, *Watkins*, for some gentle deed outside the law, can not again comfortably put his foot in London or in India outside of Rukh. This is the *Raja's* hold on him. So that, when the *Raja*, in his evening clothes, a mixture of England and India, enters, the nerves of his guests are on edge.

**Crespin**: May we hope, *Raja*, that you are making arrangements for our return?

**Raja**: Pray, pray, Major, let us postpone that question for the moment. First let us fortify ourselves.

But though the dinner is all that can be desired, the *Raja's* hospitality being almost overwhelming—though his Highness talks about Anatole France and Bernard Shaw and music—there is an undercurrent of something—a fatal tenseness—about to break. After dinner, while the cigarettes and liqueurs are being passed, the travelers settle themselves as though for sentence. The *Raja* has been talking philosophy, has been star-gazing, and *Lucilla* has suggested that other planets might be swarming with life.

**Crespin**: All of this philosophy is out of my depth, your Highness. We've had a rather fatiguing day. Mightn't we get to business?

**Raja**: To be sure. I only waited till the servants had gone. . . . We'll go into committee upon your position here (*Knocking the ashes of his cigar into the fireplace*). I'm afraid you may find it rather disagreeable.

**Crespin**: Communications bad, eh? We have a difficult journey before us?

**Raja**: A long journey, I fear—yet not precisely difficult.

Thereupon the *Raja* enters into a discussion of his family life, showing his relation to his half-brothers, condemned to death by the British Government. It is not their life that he particularly prizes; why should he, when, so to speak, they have always been politically a menace to him. As for the departure of his visitors—

**Raja**: Materially it might be managed; but morally I fear it is—excuse the colloquialism, Madam—no go.

**Crespin**: What the devil do you mean, sir. (*Making a slight movement forward.* **Traherne** *gives an involuntary start.*)

**Raja**: Since the news has spread that three Feringhis have dropped from the skies precisely at the time when three princes of the royal house are threatened with death at the hands of the Feringhi Government—my subjects have got it in their heads that you have been personally conducted hither by the Goddess. . . . In my eyes, of course, your arrival is the merest coincidence—a charming coincidence. But my people hold primitive views.

**Crespin**: Will you come to the point, sir?

Photos by Abbe.

The *Raja of Rukh*, played by George Arliss.

*Raja* to *Lucilla* (Olive Wyndham): "Remember my power. If I may not take you back to my palace as my queen, I can send you back as my concubine."

**(At the top) *Traherne* (played by Cyril life of a woman?" *Raja:* "Well, on Madam would be so gracious as to**

oto by Abbe.

*Traherne* to *Lucilla:* "Do you think it is with a light heart that I turn my back upon life and all it might have meant for you and me?"

Keightley): Does your Goddess demand the that point she might not be too exacting. If favor me with her—society——"

Olive Wyndham, leading woman in "The Green Goddess."

RAJA: The point is, Major, that the religion of my people has not yet emerged from the Mosaic stage of development; it demands an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—(*a pause*)—a life for a life.

TRAHERNE: You mean to say——

RAJA: Unfortunately I do.

LUCILLA: You would kill us——?

RAJA: Not I, Madam—the High Church party.

CRESPIN: You mean that if your brother assassins are hanged—as assuredly they will be—you will put to death in cold blood——

RAJA (*interrupting*): Oh, not in cold blood, major—there is nothing cold-blooded about the Goddess.

TRAHERNE: Does your Goddess demand the life of a woman?

RAJA: Well, on that point she might not be too exacting. If Madam would be so gracious as to favor me with her—society——

This is more than the other men can bear, and the major handles his revolver menacingly, but the *Raja* has had the teeth of that weapon removed, and the three stand powerless. Left alone, *Lucilla* breaks down at the thought of her children. The suave devil meant every word of what he said, even though *Watkins* declared that his 'Ighness had his little joke now and again. *Watkins—Watkins*—there probably lies a hope in him. As they stand discussing their predicaments, the lights are dimmed and there comes to them the hissing and chattering of—wireless!

CRESPIN: If we could only get control of the wireless for five minutes and call up the airdrome at Amil-Serai, we'd soon bring the Raja to his senses.

But where to find the installation? That is the question. Meanwhile it were best to show a stiff upper lip to the *Raja*.

CRESPIN: Curse it! I can't remember the wave-length and the call for Amil-Serai. I was constantly using it at one time.

TRAHERNE: It'll come back to you.

The *Raja* returns and informs the three that his brothers are to be executed on the morrow. He questions them to see whether they have noticed any undue noises, but receiving no satisfaction, he informs them that he is in touch with India by wireless. But no whisper of the presence of the three must ever reach the British—even to satisfy madam, who wishes to communicate with her children. The three had better resign themselves. Some three hundred miles separate them from the nearest British post!

RAJA: Gentlemen, a whisky-and-soda? No? Then good night, good night.

Scarcely can the three sleep pleasantly under such pressure of excitement.

In the *Raja's* snuggery, where the two men meet on the morrow—a room overlooking a ravine, with a billiard-room adjoining—they face a locked door. Surely here is the wireless, and here must they bring *Watkins*, if possible, and get him to send the message which will release them from this living hell. All the suave manners in the *Raja's* category can not relieve the tension. The *Raja* meets them thus.

CRESPIN: Come now, Raja, a joke's a joke, but this cat-and-mouse business gets on one's nerves. Make arrangements to send us back to the nearest post, and we'll give you our Bible oath to say nothing about this—pleasantry you've played on us——

RAJA: What can you promise that is worth a brass farthing to me? (*With sudden ferocity.*) No. Asia has a long score against you swaggering lords of creation, and, by all the gods, I mean to see some of it paid to-morrow!

He forces the two into the billiard-room for a game, while he and *Watkins* have a chat. "They are game, sir," the valet reports. But what the *Raja* wants to find out, now the three know there is wireless near, is if any one of them understands the instrument. So he plans with *Watkins* to send, with these "visitors" present, a message, and to watch for any intelligent understanding on the part of either of them. The plan is all fixed, and the guests recalled. Then the sealed door is unlocked and a complete modern wireless equipment stands revealed.

But Englishmen can be clever also under such circumstances, and there is not the shadow of recognition, not even on *Crespin's* face, as the concocted message is sent into space—nowhere! This situation is racking *Lucilla*, for she has faced the *Raja* alone, before the men return from the billiard-room, and the *Raja* proposes that she become his mistress—his favorite—and that he send for her children. She may save herself, but not the men. The many motives pulling at her heart can not, however, kill her courage. It is under this tension that she now watches *Watkins* at the keyboard. The *Raja* is a little puzzled. These English are certainly calm; they have not yet tried to bribe his valet, they do not know wireless, but—

He excuses himself to go and attend to certain preparations for the execution on the morrow which require his personal supervision. It is while he is gone that they call *Watkins*. If he does not obey them, then there is nothing left but for him to be thrown down the ravine, and thus remove one obstacle, even at the risk of immediate murder. They bribe the man, they even promise him his own figure, and when, at last, he sits at the instrument, *Crespin* watches for the thing that actually happens. *Watkins* sends nothing of the message they dictate to him. So they gag him and bind him and stand and shiver as they hear his body crash upon the rocks below. Then it is *Crespin's* turn. He takes the key, and, like a miracle—he recalls the British station's signal. He feverishly adjusts the instrument and tries to get into communication. Footsteps are heard, then a hand on the door, and the *Raja's* voice to open. But *Crespin* is transmitting wildly.

Raja (*in the hall*): Open the door, will you? What is the matter? Open the door. (*To* Captain of the Guards) Hukdhalo thub, jugan ta (Push it in, then three of you together). (*The door is quickly pushed open,* Traherne *is shoved back, and the* Raja *darts in.*)

Raja: Ah! (*Whips out a revolver and fires.*)

Crespin: Got me, by God! (*He falls on the instrument, but as he does so he has the strength to unmake the adjustments he has used.*)

Raja (*seeing the message they have concocted, written on an envelope*): Did you get this through?

Crespin (*raising himself a little*): Damn you, no! (*Falls back dead.*)

Raja: I'm sorry, Mrs. Crespin—fortunes of war! Our friend there (*to* Traherne) has twenty-four hours start of you. (*Looking at* Crespin's *body.*)

In Rukh, when they have a ceremony such as the sacrifice of so rare a trophy as an Englishman, there are many preparations to make. The *Raja* becomes no longer a political dignitary, but a High Priest of the Church. He rules according to tradition. The pavilion, or grand stand, overlooking an enclosure sacred to the Goddess, is the scene of various preparations. Murmurs and the throb of tom-toms and song give to the sacrifice a religious festive atmosphere. Here, says the *Raja* to *Traherne,* is the last lap of the race.

The doctor pleads to save *Mrs. Crespin,* but the potentate is now more intent than ever on his double vengeance—what he calls "vengeance for centuries of subjection and insult." But he is not so hard that he will not leave *Traherne* and *Mrs. Crespin* alone for a while. This privilege he will grant, since he is sure of his victims, the wireless message having been stopped in the nick of time. As he passes *Lucilla,* he says: "Before I go, Madam, may I remind you of my offer of yesterday? It is not yet too late." *Traherne* sees the body of *Crespin* from the balcony in the square below; he hears the angry murmurs of the crowds, thirsting for expiation.

Lucilla: So this is the end!

Traherne: What offer did the devil make you?

Lucilla: He offered to let me live, and to kidnap the children and bring them here—you know on what terms.

Traherne: You are wonderfully brave.

Lucilla: Brave? Not brave. If I *could* live, I *would.* But I should die of shame and misery, and leave my children—to that man. Or, if I *did* live, what sort of a mother should I be to them? They would be better without me! Oh, my precious, precious darlings! (*Rocking herself in agony.*)

Traherne (*lays his hand on her shoulder*): Do you think it is with a light heart that I turn my back upon the life of earth and all it might have meant for you and me, Lucilla!

Lucilla: Yes, for you and me.

Traherne: Do you know what it has meant to me to see you another man's wife, bound to him by ties I couldn't ask you to break? It has been hell!

Lucilla: Yes, I know. I have known from the beginning. See, the sun has gone, the shadow is upon us. Good-by, dear love. (*They kiss and stand embraced.*)

A subdued chanting is heard, and the

two part as they wait before the throne of the *Raja*. With the advance of the regulars, the ceremony begins. The *Raja* and his High Priest advance, while the minor priests begin to mutter a ritual.

RAJA (*to* LUCILLA): Must I do violence to my feelings, Madam, by including you in the approaching ceremony? There is still time. (LUCILLA *is silent.*) We autocrats are badly brought up. We are not accustomed to having our desires resisted.

TRAHERNE: Will you never stop torturing her?

RAJA: Remember my power. If I may not take you back to my palace as my queen, I can send you back as my concubine. (LUCILLA *cries out, and* TRAHERNE *takes a step forward, but is stopped by the priests. Not, however, before he has laid hands on the* RAJA.)

RAJA: Chivalrous but ill-advised, Dr. Traherne. I regret it, and so will you. You have laid impious hands on the chief of their sacred caste. (*He waves his hand toward the idol.*) My colleagues insist on subjecting you to a process of expiation.

TRAHERNE: You mean torture?

RAJA: Well—yes. (LUCILLA *cries out.*)

The *Raja* is quick to note his advantage here, and he smiles diabolically at his culprit. And he is not surprised when *Lucilla*, on hearing a muffled cry from *Traherne*, begs the *Raja* to listen to her. She will do his will if he will release *Traherne*, but, when he asks her to send for her children, she declares that she will make no bargain that involves them. This causes him to be suspicious, for he looks to them as hostages if she fail in her bargain. Finally the *Raja* consents to the following:

RAJA: I may—though it will strain my power to the uttermost—save Dr. Traherne's life, while keeping him in prison. Then, when you have fulfilled your bond—fulfilled it—when you are flesh of my flesh, the mother of my child—I will let him go.

*Lucilla* nerves herself for the acceptance of this proposition, when she hears faintly and far off the whirr of wings, the startled cries of the natives. Nearer and nearer the sound, and the *Raja* hears it too. *Captain of the Guards* rushes upon the scene crying out, "Devil machines, devil machines!" At last the answer to a message which all of them thought had been stopped by *Crespin's* death—at last, relief! But the *Raja* is calm. He believes that he may deal quickly with one plane! So, actor to the last, he seats himself in ceremonious state, and receives *Flight-Lieutenant Cardew.*

CARDEW: I have the honor of representing his Majesty the King-Emperor. I am directed to demand that you instantly surrender his subjects, forcibly detained by you.

RAJA: Demand? I am willing to discuss terms——

CARDEW: We make no terms with murderers——

RAJA: Your arrival, Lieutenant Cardew, has interrupted—temporarily—a solemn rite of our national religion. You and your friends have arrived in time to—take part in it. I will postpone it till they have landed and are in my possession. . . .

CARDEW: My friends in the other planes have no intention of landing. And if they get no signal from me within three minutes of my landing (*looking at his wrist-watch*) they will— (*There is a tremendous crash, followed by a cry of terror from the populace.*)

RAJA: Bombs! (*His calmness vanishes.*)

CARDEW: Exactly—bombs.

RAJA: I am afraid I must confess, Lieutenant Cardew, that my game is up. This comes of falling behind the times. If only I had anti-aircraft guns——

CARDEW: Thank your stars you hadn't. Then you accept our demands?

RAJA: Barbarous Asia bows to civilized Europe.

Thus does modern ingenuity outwit the wisdom of ages. And thus were *Traherne* and *Lucilla* saved to each other. Maybe the *Raja* had to join other kings in exile, but even an outwitted *Raja* may be calm and resigned. As his one-time captives leave him, he says to them in parting:

RAJA: I don't offer you my hand, for you would not take it. But I hope we may one day renew our acquaintance. Mrs. Crespin, my love to the children!

Then, when he is left alone with the image of the Green Goddess to comfort him, he turns to her, with a wicked smile.

RAJA: Well, well, she'd probably have been a damn nuisance.

*The play in the October EVERYBODY'S, out September 15—will be "Lilliom," one of the greatest successes of the New York theatrical season.*

*A Complete Novel*

# Desert Justice

## *Suppose You, a Girl, a Lawyer, Were Called Upon to Prosecute Your Father and Your Lover—Would You Do It?*

### By Honoré Willsie

*Author of "The Enchanted Cañon," "The Forbidden Trail," etc.*

Illustrations by H. Fiske

NIP BRODY stood with one foot in the stirrup. The other foot pawed the ground erratically while old Chief lunged in his usual imitation of broncohood long past.

"What's the matter, Nip? Paralyzed?" asked John Haskins, who was sitting on the steps of the post-office.

Nip did not answer. His eyes followed Ingeborg until she disappeared into the hotel, then he removed his foot from the stirrup and came back to squat by John.

"Who is she, John?" he demanded.

"Name's Olson. Came in Wednesday with her ma and pa. Pa's a lunger."

"And I been sitting with you for an hour and you never mentioned her!" exclaimed Nip bitterly.

John looked the sheriff over deliberately. Nip was a tall, gaunt man of fifty, desert bronzed, thin to the point of emaciation, bald, with long, stained front teeth like Chief's. He wore a soiled corduroy suit and a broad-brimmed felt hat.

"Nip," said John, "you go over into the hotel yonder and take a good square look at yourself in the looking-glass behind the desk. Then you'll understand why I ain't troubling myself to point out new girls to you."

Nip squared round to stare at his friend. Haskins was a nondescript little man, with faded red hair and mustache and twinkling blue eyes under a heavily wrinkled brow. His black suit was green with age and the desert sun.

"You'd better go to the hotel with me, Nip!" grunted the sheriff.

"There she comes again!" exclaimed John.

A tall woman in a blue-serge suit came deliberately down the steps of the hotel. She was bare-headed and her pale golden hair, wrapped in many braids around her head, caught the sun in a thousand dancing lights. Molly Fish, who clerked in Gilbert's store, crossed the sandy street to the post-office, her eyes never leaving the strange woman in the process.

Ingeborg was big. She was broad shouldered and deep chested and absolutely blond except her lashes, which were black. Her skin was flawless and her teeth strong and white. Her blue eyes were cool and intelligent, her nose straight, her mouth large and well cut. Her whole expression was appraising and noncommittal.

"Father another lunger, eh?" said Nip.

John nodded. "I think it should be against the law for any more of them to come to Olla, hacking and hawking around. Nice impression it makes on strangers with a lot of them corpses cluttering up the views!"

"Have a heart, John! There's only one in town now, besides Olson. That's that fellow Cresswell, at the hotel," protested Nip.

"He hasn't got T. B. any more!" cried Molly.

"Yes, and you'd be better off if you didn't know quite so much about him!" John spoke severely.

Molly tossed her head. "Thank the

Lord you aren't my boss! She walks just like a man, don't she!"

Ingeborg swung slowly up the street and came to pause before the post-office. "Good afternoon!" she said tentatively, looking at John. "You are the postmaster, aren't you?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied John.

"I was told you had a room to rent, up over the post-office."

"Yes, ma'am, I have that front room looking over the street. Who wants it?"

"I do," replied Ingeborg calmly. "I am a lawyer, and as it looks as if my father might have to spend several years in Olla I may as well put up my shingle now."

"A—a lawyer!" gasped John.

There was a stunned silence during which a dusty automobile pounded up and a tall young man crawled out from behind the wheel and stood near Ingeborg.

"A regular, honest-to-God lawyer?" demanded Nip.

Ingeborg nodded with a little smile. "A graduate of the University of Wisconsin and of its College of Law. I practised in Madison for three years until father had to come to the Southwest. Will you please show me the room, Mr. Haskins?"

John did not budge. Molly shifted from one high heel to another and brought her charming little face round into Ingeborg's line of vision.

"We never seen or heard of a lady lawyer down here!" she exclaimed. "You'll never get any business, Miss Olson, I can tell you that!"

"I've heard of 'em," said Nip; "but I never saw one before."

"There are many of us in the East!" Ingeborg's voice was impatient. "Do you always question your prospective tenants so minutely, Mr. Haskins?"

"Never had any tenants before," replied John. "Used that room to store coffins and the rest of my undertaking stuff. But since old Gilbert's bought that out and the post-office work has got so heavy——"

Molly hooted. "Heavy!"

"Ha! Ha!" ejaculated the sheriff without a smile.

"In the mean time," said Ingeborg, "how about showing me the room?"

John rose slowly and turning to the door against which he had been leaning he unlocked and opened it, disclosing a dirty stairway. When Ingeborg had followed him, Nip turned to the young man who had been a silent spectator.

"We don't want any hen lawyer in Olla, do we, Heber?"

THE newcomer was perhaps thirty years of age, olive of skin and brown of eye, with something free and eagle-like in his thin, clean-cut face.

"I didn't know you owned Olla, Nip!" he said. "It's a free country and a woman can be a lawyer if she wants to be."

Molly tossed her head. "Certainly she can be, but that ain't saying she'll get any customers!"

"Clients, Molly! Clients!" corrected Heber. "I don't know that I'd want a woman lawyer to take care of me if I did murder, but on the other hand I'm not going to try to freeze out the only lawyer that's ever tried to settle in Olla, male or female."

"Hey, Molly!" called old Gilbert from the store, "ain't you just about due back from Kansas City with the answer to that letter?"

Molly flipped her pink gingham skirts quickly into the post-office. She had just minced back to the store in the strange gait that French heels give to tortured feet when Ingeborg appeared, followed by John.

"I'll take it and pay you a month in advance, beginning now."

"All right," said Haskins reluctantly. "Remember, though, I ain't going to do janitor service."

"I'll remember. Good afternoon, Mr. Haskins," and Ingeborg crossed the street to the store.

Old Gilbert waddled forward to meet her. Ingeborg looked from his fat face and his watery gray eyes to his spotted flannel shirt and back again to his eyes.

"How do you do, Mr. Gilbert! They tell me you have almost everything in your store. Have you, by chance, an office desk and chair?"

"I have a second-hand desk, worth good money. Some of the stuff I had to take for a bad debt when the Eldorado busted."

Ingeborg followed the old man to the back of the store where from under a pile of Indian blankets and saddles Gilbert disinterred a battered roller-top desk.

"Here you are, ma'am! Is that worth twenty-five dollars to you?"

"No, it isn't," returned Ingeborg succinctly.

"Make it twenty," said old Gilbert.

"No! Let it go! Show me some wooden chairs, please, and an ordinary kitchen table."

"But that desk's worth——"

"We won't discuss that," said Ingeborg. "I don't like to haggle and as this is evidently a two-price store, the sooner you learn that peculiarity of mine the better. Let's see! This table is marked four-fifty and each of these chairs one-fifty. I'll take the three pieces and please deliver them to my office over the post-office."

"Deliver! I don't deliver! What do you think this is? A San Francisco department-store?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Ingeborg. "Well, I'm not at all helpless!" She counted the exact amount of money into the storekeeper's fat palm, swung the pine table to one splendid shoulder and walked out of the store. She set this on the sandy stoop and went back for the chairs. One by one she carried the three pieces across the sand-choked street and up the stairs to her office.

Her scanty furnishings established, Ingeborg crossed once more to the store. This time it was Molly who waited on her, nose much up in air and very business-like. A broom and dust-pan, a waste-paper basket, ink, pens, paper, a tin water-pail and basin, a hammer, a saw, some nails; these the new lawyer carried in one load to her new quarters. A dozen men were established now by the post-office door, but she passed them serenely and unflinchingly.

The office was a square, low-ceilinged room with two fly-specked windows looking down on the street. It was dirty beyond words. Ingeborg set her last load down and stood looking about her with scornful eyes. Then she picked up the hammer and drove a nail in the door. On this she hung her coat. She turned up the skirt of her dress and fastened it around her waist, tied a handkerchief over her hair, opened both windows and seized the broom. An hour later, after one more trip to the store for soap and cheese-cloth, the office to the very windows was shining with cleanliness, and Ingeborg descended in the early dusk to the deserted street.

There was an air-tight stove in a tray of sawdust in the center of the crude room used as the office of the hotel. It was the supper hour and there was no one in the room save Ingeborg's father, who sat hugging the red-hot stove. Ole Olson was a splendid ruin of a man. Ingeborg in feminine form was a replica of what Ole must have been in his youth. Still in his early fifties, in spite of his emaciation and pallor, he gave a sense of force.

"Where've you ben, Ingeborg?" he asked.

"Getting ready for business, father. I believe the whole little town is against me already."

"Yust what I told you, Ingeborg, when you started——"

"Don't let's begin that, father! If I can't support the family on law down here, I'll stake out a claim and turn miner. Where's mother?"

"Up-stairs." Ole returned to his paper.

When Ingeborg appeared again in a fresh blouse, her father and mother were already at the supper-table, with Heber Evans and Lincoln Cresswell. Cresswell rose to push in Ingeborg's chair. He was about the young lawyer's height, but weighed less. He had a round, small head and brown hair, worn military fashion, as was his small, brown mustache. His eyes were a dark gray set a little too close together. His face was a little too large and heavy for the size of his head, but these were the only faults to be found in a face that was markedly handsome. He did not look like an invalid. In fact, he was not one, but was merely finishing off the cure of a touch of tuberculosis contracted in the army and halted in an army hospital.

"May I introduce Mr. Evans, Miss Olson?" he asked. "I'm going into the mining business with him."

"I heard you struggling with John and Nip this afternoon, Miss Olson," said Heber. "You had my sympathy."

"I didn't need it, really," Ingeborg answered with a smile. "I don't mind these people in the least. After all, people are the same the world over."

"Don't you think it!" exclaimed Heber. "The desert does something to people that is hard to put into words. It loosens up some of the strings of their characters and tightens others. You'll learn some new facts about folks if you stay here long enough, Miss Olson."

"Particularly about yourself," added Cresswell.

"How long have you ben in the desert, Mrs. Cresswell?" asked Ingeborg's father.

"Six months! Six deadly, lonely months!"

Tiny, faded Mrs. Olson spoke for the first time. "I dream of Norway for the first time in many years since I ben down here."

"And you, how long, Mr. Evans?" asked Ole, ignoring his wife.

"The ten years since I finished college," answered Evans.

"And your mind still functions!" exclaimed Cresswell, wonderingly.

"I like the desert and so would you, Cresswell, if you would make up your mind to stay here and make this life yours."

"God forbid!" grunted the other. "I'm a newspaper man. How, I ask, would you suggest that I carry on my life-work in Olla?"

Everybody laughed except Mrs. Olson, who said soberly, "You ben no worse off than Ingeborg!" And she looked puzzled when there was fresh laughter.

AS THEY left the supper-table, the landlord beckoned to Ingeborg and she followed him to the desk. The office was half-filled with loungers, but he spoke too low for them to hear.

"Say, Miss Olson, I'm sorry, but there's been complaint about your father. You see, folks here in the desert gets awful nervous about all these lungers, and it sure puts a crimp in the hotel business when one gets in. I'll have to give you a week's notice."

"I don't much blame the people," said Ingeborg. "It is a menace. But I did not bother so much after I learned about Mr. Cresswell."

"He brung a doctor's certificate with him that he was through with the disease. He ain't coughed since he's been in Olla. While your dad——"

He paused uncomfortably; but Ingeborg, if she felt grief or annoyance, did not show it. "Yes, I know! But can you suggest a place for us to go? There's not a house to rent in town."

"I know it. You'll have to rent some tents. Old Gilbert will fix you up."

"I'm not made of money, unfortunately!" Ingeborg shrugged her shoulders and joined the others in the parlor. She did not speak, but she sat in a patent rocker staring at a large green-and-red calendar on the wall.

"Is anything the matter?" asked her mother.

"We can't stay here any longer," replied Ingeborg, "on account of father."

"Oh, here! That's cutting it a bit fine!" exclaimed Evans. "I'll speak to old Schwamm myself."

"No, you won't!" cried Ingeborg. "He is quite right and I shouldn't have waited for him to tell me. I don't want to go against more than one prejudice of Olla's! If I've got to batter down the feeling against a woman lawyer, I'm not going to keep them uneasy all the time about my tubercular father. We'll go to housekeeping somewhere."

"There's no place to live in Olla," said Heber. "But let me make a suggestion. My mine is five miles up the pass on the mesa to the north. There are three tent houses empty up there. Come up to the Rainy Day and live."

"But how can I manage to get to my office?" asked Ingeborg.

"Would you want to come in every day?"

Ingeborg looked at him strangely. "Would you ask a man lawyer that? I, too, have to earn my living by my profession."

"Well, there's the flivver!" suggested Cresswell.

"I can't monopolize Mr. Evans's car. Wait! Does it cost much to keep a horse down here? That's been my favorite form of exercise for several years."

"I know where you could rent a horse," said Cresswell. "Let me attend to that for you, Miss Olson!"

Ole Olson suddenly leaned forward in his chair and said fiercely: "Ingeborg, I ben going home! I yust can't live in a tent. I'm going home to Madison."

"Nonsense, father! You'll live where we have to, I should hope, in order to get well!" Ingeborg rose as she spoke.

"Oh, Ingeborg!" exclaimed her mother. "Let us go home!"

Cresswell, lighting a cigarette, did not notice as did Evans the sudden flash of tenderness that touched the young lawyer's face to surpassing beauty as she turned to her mother.

But she only said, "Don't make it harder for me, mother!" and went on to Evans, "What would the rent be and when could we move?"

"Nothing and any time!"

"Neither is satisfactory!" Ingeborg smiled. "I'll be glad to pay whatever you think is a fair price; and if it suits you, I should like to go out to-morrow and look the tents over."

"Ingeborg, you fool, don't you pay rent when you don't have to!" cried Ole in his harsh voice.

"Oh, Ingeborg, let's go home!" repeated Olga.

"Shut up, Olga!" roared Ole. "How often have I told you not to talk in front of your betters!"

With sudden fury in her face and voice, Ingeborg sprang to her feet. "Her betters! Don't you dare to speak so to my mother! Not one of us is fit to touch her garment! Least of all you, Ole Olson! You apologize! Do you hear?"

"Ingeborg! Ingeborg! Let your father talk like he wants to me. He has a right!" protested Olga.

Ingeborg stared at her mother. The passion died out of her face and voice.

"Come, father and mother," she said, "it's bedtime!"

The older people followed the fine, slow-moving figure of their daughter up the staircase.

The two young men stared at each other, then Cresswell said with a shrug, "It's magnificent, but it isn't female!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Heber.

"I mean that she's as cold-blooded and calculating as any viking. I like 'em warm and cuddly."

"Do you think she's really cold underneath?" asked the mining man as he lighted the cigarette he had held in abeyance out of respect for Ole's illness. "Don't you see that she loves her mother?"

"I think she's ice clear through. When a Scandanavian's cold, she's cold. I know them. I was raised among them. I'll bet she's a good lawyer. All brain and no sentiment. Not for me!"

"I thought you were going to look up a horse for her," said Evans.

"I am! Just because I can't like her is no reason I'm not interested in her."

"Hum!" ejaculated the other grimly.

THE next morning when John Haskins unlocked the door of the post-office a sign nailed beside the entrance to the stairway stared him in the face:

**INGEBORG OLSON**
**ATTORNEY AT LAW**

"I'll be doggoned!" muttered Haskins. And during the day most of the population of Olla was doggoned with John, who sold every stamp in the office before noon.

About two o'clock Heber Evans mounted the stairway to Ingeborg's office. Ingeborg sat at the kitchen-table, which was neatly covered with blotting-paper. There was a row of law-books on the back of the table and two shelves full of them on the wall, with a third shelf filled with filing-cases.

Ingeborg looked up from an open volume.

"How's business?" asked Heber, with a smile that was singularly sweet.

"Not booming, as yet," replied Ingeborg.

"I'm counting on curiosity bringing some of them up here before long," said Heber. "Little Molly Fish is going to burst if she doesn't find out something about you. My car's at the door, and if we're going to get out and back before dark, we'd better start. These winter days are short."

It was Ingeborg's first exploring trip around Olla. The tiny town lay in a pass with the ranges towering about it like the rim of a giant's cup. Imagine a great waste of golden desert, under a deep-blue sky, with a mighty range of mountains running north and south across it, purple and black and crimson. Picture but one pass in two hundred miles of this range and at the summit of this pass place Olla with its one street facing the railroad.

The road that led from Olla to the Rainy Day mine rose gradually and, undaunted when it reached the steep mesa front on which the mine lay, it lunged upward at an angle that gave occasional pause, even to the flivver. Ingeborg had little to say in the three-quarters of an hour consumed by the trip to the mesa. But when Heber halted the little car to let the engine cool she looked from the unending expanse of the vivid blue above to the wide, rough billows of gold below and said:

"It's ugly, but I can't seem to stop thinking about it!"

"Ugly! Only to a Northerner's eyes! I suppose if it were covered with snow and ice, you'd find it beautiful!" protested Heber.

Ingeborg nodded.

Heber smiled. "Well, the desert's beauty is subtle, but when it gets you, watch out! Its hold is infinitely greater than that of the north." He paused and eyed the girl's cool, impassive face and then said impulsively, "Or doesn't anything ever get you?"

"Why not?" exclaimed Ingeborg.

"Oh, I was just wondering!" Heber's tone was vague, and he began to crank the engine. "Yonder's the Rainy Day!"

A YELLOW peak rose abruptly from the mesa level. A hundred feet up this mountainside lay the mine tunnel from whose opening an aerial tramway dropped to the mill, a tall red building standing gaunt and crude on the mesa. To the north of the mill, at the foot of the peak, was the wet mess of the sump. Beyond this the little sheet-iron office, the long gray line of the boarding-house, and beyond these, tent houses, gray against the yellow mountain. Evans drew up before the last three of the tents.

"Several miners have quit recently," he said, "and zinc's so low I don't expect to take on any more men for a while. Now if these tents at five dollars a month will be useful to you, you're welcome to them. One of the miners had his folks with him and I bought his stove and cooking outfit. You'll have to get the other things. If I were you, I'd let my father knock together the greater part of your furniture. It'll save money and give him something to do. There's a corral and shed for horses over near the office. Your critter can board with our horses."

Ingeborg returned from her inspection of the tents quickly. "They are fine! You are more than kind and thoughtful, Mr. Evans."

"New people are a godsend around Olla!" chuckled Heber. "I'm going to run you straight back, if you don't mind, Miss Olson. I promised to bring Cresswell back here for supper. He'll be a partner in the Rainy Day as soon as the papers are drawn up."

Ingeborg's blue eyes twinkled. She opened her pocketbook and laid a card on Heber's knee, "INGEBORG OLSON, Attorney at Law."

"Well, I don't know why you couldn't draw up the papers for us. I'm a fair mining lawyer myself, and if—" He hesitated.

"If I don't do a good job, you can check me up!" finished Ingeborg. "If I were a man lawyer, you wouldn't say that to me."

"Miss Olson, how on earth did you come to choose such a profession? Do you mind telling me?"

"Not at all! There is nothing strange about it. I was born and brought up on a farm just outside of Madison. My father and mother came to this country when they were first married, paid a little something down on the farm and then worked for twenty years to pay the interest and reduce the mortgage. I was the only child. One of my earliest recollections is of seeing my mother hitched beside the horse pulling at the plow. And my earliest determination was that when I grew up I would not work as a horse works.

"Not that that determination prevented my father from demanding from me every ounce of physical labor that he could until I was sixteen and in the high school. Then I rebelled, and although mother and I worked hard in the house we never went into the fields again. I did good work in the high school, then father wanted me to teach. But I wanted to go to the university. I'm not going to bore you with the details of that struggle between us. But I won.

"While I was a freshman, the dean of the law school heard me in a debate with the senior team and he persuaded me to take up the study of law, after I had finished the collegiate course. There were already several women in his law classes. He is a fine, farseeing man."

"How did your father take it?" asked Heber.

Ingeborg groaned. "Don't ask me!" Then she said, after watching Heber's skilful guiding of the car over the tortuous trail: "Life has been a struggle for me. My father always has opposed me."

"Yet you are not unlike in many ways, I imagine!"

"Oh, you are quite mistaken!" said Ingeborg flatly.

Heber, glancing sideways at Ingeborg's face, thought of Cresswell's estimate of her temperament. "She may be ice," he thought, "but I doubt it, like thunder!" Aloud he said: "How do you suppose you came to be so different from your parents?"

"You just said," Ingeborg's smile was a little twisted, "that I was like my father."

"You are, in some ways," insisted Heber.

"Perhaps I get a little forcefulness from my father, but nothing else, I hope. If you know anything about the children of immigrants in this country, you need not be surprised at me. America opens the prison-gates for such children."

Heber guided the car up to the steps of the hotel before either of them spoke again. Then he said: "Well, we'll see what the desert does to the Northwoman!"

It was less than a week before the Olsons were settled at the Rainy Day. Lincoln Cresswell moved out to the mine at the same time. He shared Heber's quarters in the office, eating with him at the miners' table. Ole and Olga, his wife, protested to the last. Cresswell, passing the tents at dusk the first night, saw Mrs. Olson at the door of Ingeborg's tent. Her tiny bent figure was silhouetted against the lamplight as she stood leaning against the door frame.

"I think you'll have to let us go back, Ingeborg," she said. "We ben too homesick!"

"Oh, you'll get over it!" answered Ingeborg from within. "Just so father gets well! That's the point, isn't it?"

"You don't guess how homesick your father is, Ingeborg. Let us go home!"

"Now once and for all, mother, I say, no! We'll stick it out until father is well or—otherwise. Go back to him now and don't bother me with this again."

As far as Lincoln knew, the incident ended here; for in the long silence that ensued he went on to the office. So he did not see Mrs. Olson put a worn hand over her face, nor see Ingeborg go suddenly to her mother and put a strong arm over her shoulder, nor did he hear her say with a strangely moving note of tenderness in her voice:

"Mother! Mother! Help me! I'm trying so hard to do the right thing by father! Don't fail me! You've always been strong!"

But Lincoln went on to the office and repeated what he had heard to Heber. "Cold as ice, I tell you, Heber! I could have wept for the poor old woman."

"She's a pathetic figure," agreed Heber. "But," he lighted a cigarette thoughtfully, "I think the daughter deserves the most sympathy."

"Sympathy! My foot! She'll get ahead in the world! I'll admit she's clever. At least she drew those papers up well enough for us."

Heber nodded. "I like her. I'm sure she can handle matters for our company very well and we might try her out as our attorney."

"Well," laughed Cresswell, "considering the amount of litigation we have not yet had, I should say it was quite safe to let her represent us."

Evans smiled a little ruefully.

"Look here," the other went on, "let's go up and take some samples from the old Frangi Panni. I believe I can find enough money to get the free gold out of her. By the way, why the Frangi Panni?"

"Old Elkins was very proud of that name. He told me once that it sounded like a mining name, the first time he ever heard it." The partners laughed and turned to their evening work.

THE Rainy Day, so far, had been Ingeborg's sole client. Every morning at seven-thirty she mounted the dappled gray mare that Lincoln had found for her and rode into Olla. After she had turned the horse into the corral behind old Gilbert's store, she put her office in spotless order and began to bone steadily on a fat volume on mining law. She ate a cold lunch at noon. And though as the days slipped by her lips grew a little tense, no one at the Rainy Day heard her complain or speak faint-heartedly.

After a week or so the excitement in Olla over her arrival subsided. She rode back and forth between her tent home and her office without observing a curious eye at every window. She was an imposing figure on a horse and she rode well. Even Olla admitted this. But Olla did not like Ingeborg. She kept to herself. She had a strange profession for a woman. She was excessively friendly with the two most desirable males in Palomas county. She was not a female as Olla knew the sex and, male and female, Olla felt a decided antagonism toward her.

One afternoon after the three-thirty train from the East had come and gone and the mail had been distributed, Ingeborg went down as usual to the post-office. The customary crowd of men hung about the steps and the wooden platform. Ingeborg, coming out of the door with a handful of mail, met Molly Fish. Molly, pretty and perky as usual, glanced with a knowing, sidewise look at the masculine audience and said to Ingeborg:

"Miss Olson, I should think you'd be ashamed to let the steps in front of your office be as filthy as this!"

She jerked her dimpled chin downward and the group of male loungers and Ingeborg followed the gesture. As usual the platform and steps were thick spread with tobacco-juice.

"I am ashamed!" replied Ingeborg coolly.

"Well, you're one of these smart-alec lawyers, why don't you do something?" demanded Molly. "Lord knows the rest of us women folks in Olla have jawed the men till we're tired. Put the law on 'em, Miss Olson, if you're such a wonder!"

"As far as I know," replied Ingeborg, with her slow quiet smile, "Olla has no laws. But, of course, you don't need laws when you have the right kind of public opinion. It was public opinion and not a non-spitting ordinance that put my father out of the hotel. If you girls had put the same energy into stigmatizing the men for a dirty habit like this that you have into stigmatizing me for trying to earn a living in the way I'm particularly fitted for earning it, this place wouldn't be a menace to health."

She turned on her heel and went up-stairs. But she hardly had settled at her desk before Molly flung open the door. Molly must have been about seventeen. She was small and delicate, with bright brown eyes and a mass of curly brown hair. She had the saucy manner of a spoiled child.

"You think you're smart, don't you, to try to make a fool of me in front of those men! I told Mr. Cresswell——"

Ingeborg rose and pulled forward the other chair. "Sit down, do! And let's talk it over! It's nice to see you. You're the first girl that's come to my office."

Molly sat down on the edge of the chair. "If you are so smart, get the law on that mess down there," she repeated.

"We don't need law," said Ingeborg. "All we need is public opinion, expressed with unmistakable clearness. Are most of those men down there American-born?"

Molly's eye became interested. She checked off the men on her fingers, then nodded.

"We can shame them, then," said Ingeborg. "Are there eight women in this town who are up to putting over a practical joke?"

"Sure!" replied the girl.

"Good!" Ingeborg went on. "Then I believe that if you and I and eight other women armed ourselves with brooms and pails and soapsuds, and in the next hour cleaned up that platform with the men looking on, it might cure them."

Molly's bright eyes began to twinkle, but she said dubiously, "Well, they all chew and they've got to spit somewhere."

"Could we get a big packing-box of sawdust over at the store?" asked Ingeborg.

Molly laughed outright. "You certainly can! I'm going after the girls now. More than eight will want to come!"

"Only eight," Ingeborg's voice was firm. "That's all you can keep in order. Nobody must speak or laugh until the job is done. Have them come at once to the corral."

Half an hour later Ingeborg, carrying her pail and broom, made her way to the corral. There she found Molly with a laughing group of girls and women, to each of whom Molly introduced her. A few minutes later Nip Brody was coming out of the post-office door while taking a huge bite of plug when he saw a strange procession heading across the street.

"What in thunder!" he exclaimed. Then silence fell on him and on his fellow culprits as Molly led their wives, daughters or sweethearts on the platform and the unsavory task was begun. Nor did any one speak until the last pailful of water had been emptied. Then John Haskins said meekly, "What's the idea, girls?"

The girls did not reply. They trailed across the street after Molly, returning at once with the box of sawdust, which they deposited with a bang.

Then there was another silence while the men glared at their women folks. This time it was the sheriff who spoke.

"All right, ladies," he said. "You win!"

A shout of laughter rose, during which Ingeborg ran up-stairs. But when she rode slowly home along the sandy street of Olla that evening several people nodded to her. And when she reached the crest of the mesa she pulled up the mare for a minute while she looked back at the pass where the little town lay.

"It's a big country," she said aloud. "A glorious big country!"

THAT evening, as the Olsons sat in their living-tent, Lincoln and Heber came laughing to make a call. They had heard the story of the clean-up at the post-office and they had come to congratulate Ingeborg. When they had exhausted the subject, Heber turned to Ole.

"Mr. Olson, Cresswell here and I are going to take on the Frangi Panni mine, up next to the Rainy Day. The old fellow who's been a watchman there for five years is leaving and we're wondering if you can't take on the job until we're ready to begin work. Fifty dollars a month and a nice little four-room house to live in."

"What would I have to do?" asked Ole.

"Just stick around," answered Heber, "and see that no one steals anything."

"I'll take it!" exclaimed Ole. "I'll move to-morrow."

"Ole, it ben very lonesome, up there," whispered Olga. "Down here are people. Why don't you go up every morning and come back every night?"

"But we need the watchman particularly at night, Mrs. Olson," said Lincoln, "and you'll have a nice house there."

The little woman twisted her hands together, but said nothing more. When the visitors were gone, Ingeborg rose, saying, "It's bedtime, father!"

Ole turned on her with a hoarse snarl. "I ben earning my own way, now, Ingeborg. You can't boss me any more. I don't have to ask you for a cent. And yust as soon as I can save the money I'll go back to the old farm. You have made me crazy, keeping all the money, as if I was a child."

"You know now how mother and I felt all those years you never allowed us a cent of our own. It's just retribution!"

"I'll show you!" cried Ole furiously. "You think I ben old and sick and on the shelf. I'll show you yet!"

Ingeborg shrugged her shoulders. "Well, all your life you've worshiped money. I can't expect you to change now."

"I'll show you!" repeated Ole. "You thought if you kept all the money away from me I couldn't get back to Madison. I'll fool you yet. Somehow, anyhow, I'll get the money together and I'll get home. Dragging me down here in this hell to die from your fool American ways! I'll show you!"

And he disappeared out of the door followed by Olga. Ingeborg again shrugged her shoulders and went to bed.

The following noon, just after Ingeborg had finished her sandwiches and cold tea, John Haskins banged on her door and came in. He grinned a little sheepishly.

"Seems like you ladies put one over on us yesterday!"

"Just an expression of public opinion, as I told Molly Fish!" Ingeborg was smiling too, showing her strong white teeth. "Sit down, won't you, Mr. Haskins?"

John sidled on to the chair. "Well," he said, "we was all talking over at the hotel last night and we agreed that, while you may or may not know the law, looks like you know men. But I didn't come up to tell you that. I came up for a little private information. It strikes me about time for Olla to go on the map as a regular, sure-enough town with some decent ordinances. And I thought you might know how to go at it. I'm prepared to pay you whatever you think is fair for the information. Though I ain't a rich man. Don't forget that when you make out your bill."

"I won't," returned Ingeborg, "because I don't want money for that kind of public service. The welfare of Olla is my welfare, as I see it, and I'll do all I can to help Olla organize itself and I won't charge a cent for it."

"Well," Haskins shook his head slowly, "that may be clever politics and it may be plain generosity. Anyhow, I'm much obliged. Fire ahead, Miss Olson."

"Your State constitution," said Ingeborg, "provides in a general way for your town organization. Your county is fairly well organized. Now, if you will get twenty-five voters to sign a petition to your board of county commissioners for a township organization, you can then call a town meeting as the law prescribes, elect officers, assess taxes and form all the rest of the machinery of local government."

"Will you fix up that petition for me?" asked John.

"Gladly! You may have it to-morrow morning."

*Everybody's Magazine, September, 1921*

Haskins rose slowly. "Well, if I get the town organized on your say-so, I ain't going to deny but what you've got brains and some of the elements of the law in you. I'll be up early in the morning for that paper, Miss Olson."

"Very well, Mr. Haskins. I'll be ready for you." Ingeborg turned back to her desk.

Molly Fish was Ingeborg's next caller. She came in a little breathlessly. "I got the hiccoughs," she said, "I hurried so much to get here in my dinner-hour."

"Have a drink of water," suggested Ingeborg, rising to offer a brimming glass.

Molly drank, then looked at Ingeborg curiously. "You have manners like a nice man. I—I— Miss Olson, do you honestly know much about the law?"

"I had to know a decent amount to be admitted to the bar, didn't I?" demanded Ingeborg. "I handled a number of divorce cases in Wisconsin, and I was attorney for a man indicted for murder and won the case. I had a number of petty cases besides."

"Well, I guess it's as hard to trust a woman lawyer as it is a woman doctor," sighed Molly.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Ingeborg. "Women doctors won their place long ago, except in backwoods spots like Olla. There is no sex in brain, Miss Fish!"

Molly fidgeted with her handkerchief. "Well, I want you to do something for me, but promise me first that you won't tell."

"I promise," replied Ingeborg.

"I want you to find out for me whether Lincoln Cresswell's married or not."

"But that's a detective's job!" protested Ingeborg.

"Look here! If you take me on to look out for my interests, ain't it your business to look out for 'em?"

"I didn't know I was to take you on," replied Ingeborg, trying not to smile.

"Well, you are! I've got to have some one to tell my troubles to even if I have to pay them to listen. What do you charge?"

"It depends on what I do. Why do you want me to investigate Mr. Cresswell, Miss Fish?"

Molly bridled and tossed her head. "Didn't you know he has been paying me steady attention ever since he came to Olla? We go over to Palomas once a week to the movies in Heber Evans's car and he takes me to any dances that happen and he calls twice a week at my house besides. I consider myself engaged to him."

"Why don't you ask him yourself if he's married, Miss Fish? Or get your mother to do it."

"Mother! Huh! I'm too old for my mother to run my business. My goodness, a girl has hard work to get some fun in this little hick town! Just because my father was the original old inhabitant, everybody in town thinks they've got a right to watch me. Anyhow, I did ask him, myself. And he said he wasn't married. But a traveling man who was in our store a while ago told me he knows Lincoln's wife back in Milwaukee. I told Lincoln and he just laughed and said the man was crazy."

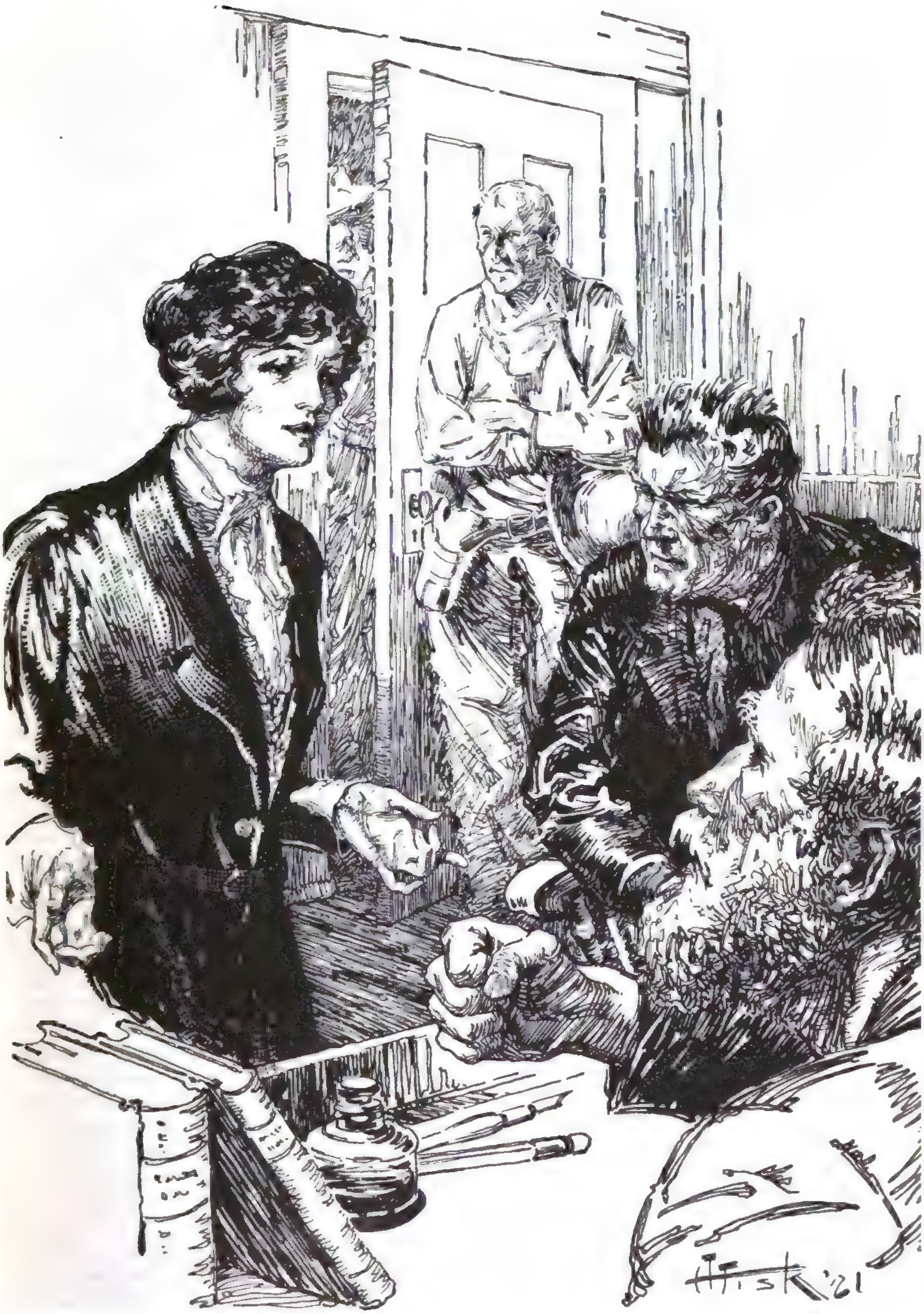
"I'll find out for you, Miss Fish," said Ingeborg. "I don't know how long it will take me, but I'll let you know the minute I do."

Molly rose. The hiccoughs had disappeared and she said good-by calmly and with a distinct look of relief in her pretty eyes.

Ingeborg had no more callers that day, but during the week which followed half a dozen persons came in on unimportant business. Olla was now willing to try her out on matters that didn't count. But Ingeborg bided her time with the curious cool patience of her race.

AS THE weeks slipped by, spring began its march upon the desert and Ingeborg, riding back and forth between the mesa and the pass, watched its progress with observant eyes. The singing of the northern birds that had so long intrigued her homesick fancy ceased and silence, complete save for the whisperings of the wind, settled on the vast wastes of sand. Cactus and cat's-claw that all winter had stood gray and inert hour by hour grew more vivid. Then came three days of rain and wild rush of wind. But on the morning of the third day the sun rolled up over the pass with a new warmth in its long rays, and when Ingeborg rode down the trail she beheld the desert tinted like an artist's palette. Every cactus was gorgeous with blossoms.

"It's too much sudden beauty!" exclaimed Ingeborg to the gray mare. "For the first time in my life, I feel as if I didn't want to work. I could lie all day on the



"I am a cowman and not a lawyer," the judge shouted, "and let me tell you, my girl, that if I allowed you to send your father to jail, you and I both would be run out of the country."

mountainside just drinking in this grandeur of silence and warmth."

When she reached her office, she was still in her mood of idleness, and she sat staring at her mail for some time before she opened it. Finally her glance fell on one postmarked Palomas and, with a little sense of surprise, she opened it. It was from Alfred Johns, the district attorney of Olla County.

> MY DEAR MISS OLSON:
>
> I was glad to learn that another lawyer had settled in Olla County, though I'll admit frankly that I was surprised that this lawyer was a woman. However, the bar must be congratulated that the county can now boast three lawyers instead of two as hitherto. This note is, however, not entirely a congratulatory one. I had the misfortune last week to break my leg and I am writing to ask you please to act as prosecuting attorney for such cases as may arise in the town of Olla during my confinement in bed. Thanking you in advance for your courtesy in the matter,
>
> I am, very fraternally yours,
>
> ALFRED C. JOHNS.

Ingeborg laid the letter down with a smile. Considering the paucity of legal business in Olla, the chances of her acting as prosecuting attorney were slight. But she interpreted the letter as a kindly meant welcome from a lawyer who might have made her position difficult, and she was sincerely pleased. She turned to her books with a new vim, and that night she made a trip to the office of the Rainy Day to tell the partners of the letter. They both congratualted her heartily, though Ingeborg thought they exchanged a curious glance when she first broke the news.

Perhaps a week later Cresswell came into Ingeborg's office. He did not greet her, but walked quickly over to her desk and leaning on it with one hand, his small eyes half closed, he said, "And just why, Miss Olson, should you pry into my private affairs?"

"So Molly Fish couldn't keep her mouth shut!" exclaimed Ingeborg.

"Just what was the great idea?" demanded the man.

"No idea at all! Merely business," answered Ingeborg.

"Did you or did you not send up to Milwaukee and rake up a lot of dirty gossip about me?"

"I found out some facts for Molly Fish, who is my client," replied Ingeborg.

"I thought you were attorney for me and Evans!" sneered Cresswell.

"I am attorney for the Rainy Day Mining Company. I am not and I never would be your personal attorney, Mr. Cresswell."

"Did you tell Molly Fish that my wife is getting a divorce from me because of that French girl and the baby?"

"Yes, I did; and it is true."

Cresswell stared speechlessly at Ingeborg for a moment, then he shouted: "I'll not have any alleged she lawyer putting her nose into my business! You keep off my preserves, Miss Olson, or I'll make Olla too hot for you."

"Mr. Cresswell," Ingeborg rose slowly, "I shall take any decent business that is offered me without regard to you or any one else. Crookedness is crookedness whether it emanates from friends or enemies."

"Or relatives, I suppose!" sneered Lincoln. "Of course if one of your own family turned out to be a crook, you'd prosecute them just as ardently as you would me, for example."

"I certainly would!" exclaimed Ingeborg.

"Very well, then, Miss District Attorney! For the past three weeks your father has been stealing gold from some of the old workings of the Frangi Panni. Evans and I were going to fix it up quietly. But now I am going over to Palomas and swear out a warrant for him and have Sheriff Brody arrest him. And as acting county prosecutor, I demand that you prosecute him to the full extent of the law!"

For a moment, all of Ingeborg's charming color deserted her. She stood with her broad shoulders squared back. Lincoln's mouth was twisted sardonically. Ingeborg drew a deep breath and walked over to the wall where her hat hung.

"Be very sure, Mr. Cresswell," she said, "that I'll do my duty by the Rainy Day Mining Company, whatever it may demand of me. Is Mr. Evans out at the mine?"

"Yes," replied Lincoln curtly.

"I want to close my office," said Ingeborg.

There was a curious look in Lincoln's eyes as he passed out. Ingeborg thought that perhaps a vague look of shame was struggling with his anger. But her own eyes expressed only a determination as cold as ice. She slipped off the skirt she wore over her riding-breeches, locked the door and walked rapidly over to the corral.

Cresswell did not follow her at once to

the mine. She rode directly to the office and entered. There was a desk and a cot on either side of the room. In the center was a rough table piled with pipes, magazines, ore samples, spurs and all the other miscellaneous impedimenta of a man's camp. Evans in his worn corduroys, his hat on the back of his head, was standing by the table, examining an ore sample. As Ingeborg came in, he looked up with a smile.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, tossing his hat on the table. "Aren't you off your trail a bit?"

"Mr. Evans," said Ingeborg, "Mr. Cresswell has just told me that my father has been stealing gold from you."

A flush covered Heber's lean, brown face. "Lincoln agreed with me that we'd not let you know. What does he mean by this!"

"He's angry because I procured some information about him for a client of mine." Ingeborg pulled off her gloves and ran her fingers around her collar as if it felt a little tight. "Then you have actual proof?"

Heber nodded. "We've watched him for three nights. There's a small pocket of free gold in the Frangi Panni with sizable nuggets that I opened up some time ago. We left it as it was because Lincoln and I thought when we came to sell the mine it would be a good stunt to let the prospective buyer dig himself out a nugget or two. The other night I couldn't sleep and I was prowling up the mountain when I saw your father go into the tunnel. It was bright moonlight. I thought maybe he had heard something suspicious. I followed him and saw him clean up and pocket a number of nuggets. On the two following nights Lincoln and I saw him do the same thing."

"I knew he was small and mean!" exclaimed Ingeborg bitterly, "but I never thought he was actually dishonest."

"It's been my observation," returned Heber, "that it's very hard to draw the line between miserliness and actual dishonesty. But that isn't the point. I hadn't the slightest idea of making trouble for you. I was going to throw the fear of the Lord into your father and take his job away from him. That was all. Wait till I see Lincoln!"

"My father deserves punishment," said Ingeborg. "He's a hard, miserly man. He never had pity on me or any other human being where money was concerned."

"Yes, that's probably true." Heber drew a long breath. "But after all he's your father and he's frantic with homesickness. I don't think you have any idea how he and your mother are suffering from homesickness. I have seen T. B. patients kill themselves down here who were less frantic for home than your father is. There's Cresswell, now!"

A motor stopped at the door and Lincoln came in. He shut the door very deliberately behind him.

"Cresswell," cried Heber, "why did you break your agreement with me?"

"Do you know what this woman has done?" Lincoln leaned across the table and shouted into Heber's face. "She's gone back to my home town and raked up some dirty gossip about me and told it to Molly Fish. It's all over Olla now. And me trying to save her thief of a father!"

"We are not going to arrest Olson!" said Heber flatly.

"We'll have Sheriff Brody up here and we'll have the prosecuting attorney press the case for us!" shouted Cresswell.

"We will not!" declared Heber in a low voice.

"We'll carry it through or I'll get out of your mining company with my ten thousand dollars!"

"You can't do that. Your contract is binding!" said Ingeborg quickly.

Cresswell whirled on her. "As I suppose yours is in which you agreed to defend all interests of the Rainy Day Mining Company in return for stock, which was delivered to you!"

"Yes, both contracts are binding and must be lived up to," replied Ingeborg.

"Of course," sneered Cresswell, "I realize what the lady is up against. She hates to appear before Olla as prosecuting her own father. And I suppose she's smart enough to know how to break her contract legally. But she's got enough of the old man to hate to give up her only paying prospect, and she won't do it. No real woman could be a real lawyer. Her feminine tenderness won't let her. But nowhere in her icy interior has this person got a spark of filial feeling!"

He stopped for breath, looking from Heber to the young lawyer. Ingeborg stood, shoulders back, chin up, with a dignity in her silence that made Heber feel that she needed no defense. And suddenly Cresswell turned on his heel and went out.

"I beg of you, Miss Olson—" Heber began eagerly.

Ingeborg interrupted him. "I appreciate your delicacy and sympathy, Mr. Evans, but there is going to be no trouble in your firm over me. I shall take care of this case, as I agreed to take care of such cases for Mr. Johns."

Heber threw up his brown hands. For the first time, Ingeborg's breath came a little quickly. "Look, Mr. Evans! There is a divine sort of justice in it. He has tried so hard to make me as shabby and avaricious as himself. He has made it so terribly hard for me to carry on my profession!"

"There's nothing divine about it!" asserted Heber. "It may be your snow-field idea of justice, but it's not desert justice. Here we know mighty little about the law, but a whole lot about human kindness. And we recognize all sorts of intangible obligations that the law doesn't know exists."

"But I'm a lawyer and I must not recognize them! I am going back to my office now. I'll talk the details of this over with you and Mr. Cresswell this evening.

Through the window Heber watched her mount the dappled mare and ride away. Then he picked up the riding-gloves she had left on the table and laid his cheek against them, after which he put them away in a drawer of his desk, which he locked.

BUT Ingeborg had not reckoned on the fulness of Cresswell's vindictiveness. That afternoon Sheriff Nip Brody clanked into Ingeborg's office.

"Say, Miss Olson, here's a hell of a note! I gotta go up and arrest your dad! What did you want to start that gossip about Cresswell for? Not but what I'm glad Molly got her eyes open. But anyhow, can't you calm Cresswell down? You're their lawyer, he says."

"It's an unfortunate situation," said Ingeborg, her cheeks paling. "But the law must run its course. When are you going up to the mine? I want to be with my mother."

"Well, Cresswell wants me to go now, but hanged if I don't wish I would sprain my ankle." He looked at Ingeborg curiously. "You're a cool one. I expected to find you crying—like a woman should ought to be, under the circumstance!" he finished sternly.

"Would you expect a man lawyer to weep?" snapped Ingeborg.

"No, but I'd expect him to get his dad out of trouble!" retorted Nip.

"My father stole. If I refused to press the case, you'd all turn round and say I was too feminine to be a real lawyer."

The sheriff stared at Ingeborg's pale face with a mixture of admiration and disapproval in his eyes.

"Doggoned if I don't think you might be a good lawyer, even if you are a darned poor daughter! I'll be up to your dad's place right after supper." He clanked down the stairs.

Ingeborg sat long in her office. She did not read. For the most part, she sat with her strong white hands gripping her knee while she reviewed her case against her father. Not the case of the Rainy Day Mining Company, but the case of Ingeborg Olson against Ole Olson. It had its beginning in a bleak and lonely and overworked childhood, a childhood that was spent in close contact with brute facts. It stretched on through a bitter, overworked and thwarted girlhood and a stormy womanhood. It was complicated by the fact that Ingeborg was the child of her father far more than of her mother; complicated and made doubly bitter by that fact.

It was sunset when Ingeborg started homeward. The pass was filled with shadows, but as she rode out of the pass to the up trail such a blinding glory met her vision that she pulled up her horse and sat for a long moment gazing from the yellow desert with its unbelievable mosaic of flowers to the heavenly gates of the sunset opening through the far westward peaks. There never was a northern sunset like this. Gorgeously the sun sinks in the north, but never with a passionate beauty like this, never with mystic appeal of burning ardors, a lift of something primeval, something that stirs the blood to wondering desires that only the desert knows.

Ingeborg started the gray mare on slowly, reached the Frangi Panni as dusk was purpling the mountainside, stabled the horse and entered the little house just as her mother was putting supper on the table.

"You ben late, Ingeborg!" said Olga.

Ole was washing his hands at a bench

in the corner. "How are you to-night, father?" asked Ingeborg.

"Aw, nothin's the matter with me! Soon's I ben stopping these night-sweats I ben going home to Madison."

Ingeborg made no reply, but went to her own tent to prepare for supper. When she returned, her father and mother were eating.

"Just give me a cup of tea, mother," she said. "I'm not hungry."

"Who's that?" exclaimed Ole as footsteps sounded on the porch.

Ingeborg's jaw set. A moment later Sheriff Brody, followed by Evans and Cresswell, entered the room. Neither Ingeborg nor her mother stirred, but Ole rose and with a curiously watchful expression on his white face he demanded, "Yust what do you folks want, coming in without knocking?"

"Sorry, old scout," answered Brody, moving his shoulders uncomfortably, "but I gotta take you down to Palomas with me to-night. Why in thunder couldn't you behave yourself with the gates ajar for you and your daughter trying to get a start in life? Why didn't you——"

"For heaven's sake, Nip," interrupted Cresswell, "this isn't a revival meeting! Arrest him and be done with it!"

Olga Olson, with a quick gasp, ran round to her husband's side. Sheriff Brody cleared his throat. "You're accused of stealing free gold from the Frangi Panni mine, Olson. Don't make any trouble, but come along quiet."

Ole did not once glance toward Ingeborg. He did not look at his wife's hand trembling on his arm. But his blue eyes smoldered as they turned from Brody to the partners and back again.

"Who ben accusing me?" he demanded hoarsely.

"Both Cresswell and I saw you, Mr. Olson," said Heber gently; "but I personally shall not press the charge."

"But I will!" Cresswell's voice was belligerent. "And your lawyer daughter will either prosecute you or cease to be our attorney."

"Cresswell!" cried Heber furiously, "I'm through with you!"

"No, you're not!" returned Lincoln. "Our attorney says our contract is binding and it binds! See?"

Ingeborg slowly pushed her cup of tea away from her and rose. She and Heber were the tallest people in the room, for Ole's hollow chest and drooping shoulders took a good two inches from his once splendid stature. Ingeborg's face was pale, but her level blue eyes and her mobile lips were steady.

"Sheriff Brody," she said, "I should like to have the accused understand that if he returns the gold that has been stolen it is highly probable that the judge will——"

Cresswell interrupted. "Don't try to save him, Miss Olson."

"Return the gold!" croaked Ole. "Olga, our daughter takes the word of these strangers that I stole."

"But Ole, if she can keep you from going to jail!" pleaded Olga, the tears running down her careworn cheeks.

"Ingeborg keep me from going to jail?" snarled Ole. "You think I'd take that from her hands? No! I'll go and stand trial, then I'll go home to Madison!"

"Having cached away a nice little sum out of the Frangi Panni, eh? Well, there's nothing so slow about you, friend Olson!" sneered Lincoln.

Ingeborg's cheeks were crimson now. She turned to her mother. "Go with him, mother. Here's my purse."

Ole struck the purse from his wife's fingers. "I ben telling you for months I ben through with Ingeborg! Since she was a little mite, so high, she's ben against me. If she left the Rainy Day Mining Company now and come to me on her knees and begged me to let her be my lawyer, I'd laugh in her face. Here, Brody, you hurry up and take me to jail."

"I'll be in Palomas early in the morning, sheriff," said Ingeborg in a low voice, and she turned and went out into the night. After a moment, Evans followed her. It was starlight and Ingeborg followed the corkscrew trail that led above the Frangi Panni to a shoulder of the mountain. Here she sat down on a rock and gazed at the delicate silver infinity below and beyond her. She did not speak when Heber joined her, but she made room for him on the rock beside her. They sat in silence until the *put-put* of the automobile died away below the mesa.

Then Heber said, "I am so sorry. I did my best——"

"Please don't let's talk about it," said Ingeborg quickly.

"I wish I understood you," Heber spoke slowly. "You are unlike any woman or man either that I have ever met."

"I am not at all unlike a man!" returned Ingeborg. "I try to handle what has always been a man's profession in a man's way. You all want me to handle it like a woman and fail. I refuse to do so, therefore I am queer."

There was another long silence, then Heber asked, "Do you like the desert any better than you did?"

"I don't know. In the north I took the scenery for granted. I thought it lovely and let it go at that. But the desert won't let me alone. I am conscious of it brooding all about me, even when I'm in my office. I think of it instead of my work when I ride back and forth. When I wake up in the night, I know it's there, silent, waiting for me."

"I'm glad," said Heber simply. "I love it very much myself." Then as if he were conscious that a struggle the depth of which and the reason for which he could only surmise was going on in the motionless figure beside him Heber laid his sinewy brown hand on the two white ones clasped so strongly about the whipcord knee.

"I wish you would feel," he said, "that while I stongly disapprove, I realize that I only hazily understand and I am very deeply your friend."

Ingeborg caught her breath. "You saw how it was! How she clung to him! How it was impossible for her to see my side? And yet it was he who broke her. She has lived on the rack for him for thirty years!" She paused. Then, "Oh, well, what's the use!" she sighed, rising as she spoke. "I must go down! Will you and Mr. Cresswell be ready to start for Palomas with me by seven o'clock in the morning? I want to push this thing through quickly. I'll try to get the justice of the peace to set the trial for early afternoon."

"Better let us follow you," suggested Heber. "I don't fancy that long ride with Lincoln in his present frame of mind toward you."

"All right!" And Ingeborg moved off slowly down the trail.

WHEN she passed the Rainy Day the next morning, there was no sign of the partners. She was obliged to pass through Olla on her way to Palomas. There was an unprecedented number of loungers about her door, but they were doomed to disappointment, for she rode through without stopping.

Palomas with its fifteen hundred souls was a seething metropolis compared with Olla. But Ingeborg had no eyes for comparisons. On the sandy main street she stopped a small boy and asked him the way to the jail. He directed her as succinctly as he could with his jaw hanging, then he shot away from her with an ill-subdued shout.

"There's the lady lawyer! There's the lady lawyer that sent her dad to jail!"

Nip Brody, refreshing himself with a chew of gigantic proportions, was descanting on the merits of the new case when Ingeborg rode up. He came down the steps and up to the gray mare, whose dusty neck he smoothed gently.

"Howdy, Miss Olson! Judge Hill's over in his office now. Shall I fetch you to him?"

"Yes, if you'll tell me where I can have my horse cared for first."

Nip turned to the listening group. "Will one of you fellows take Miss Olson's horse over to Brown's livery?"

The group stepped forward as one man. Ingeborg dismounted wearily and followed Nip under a group of palm-trees to the door of a small concrete court-house, of which the jail formed one wing.

"You see what folks is like!" grumbled the sheriff. "They all can't say mean enough things about you for prosecuting your own father, and yet they all want to do something for this notorious character that's come among us, so's they can gossip about it."

"How did my mother stand the trip?" asked Ingeborg.

"Fine, though she cries pretty steady. But I give 'em my room at the jail and they have their meals sent over from the hotel. They're mighty comfortable. From the look of your ma's hands, I'd say it was the easiest she'd ever had it. And your pa, by heck! looks like the cat that swallowed the canary."

"Did you make a thorough search of the house last night?" asked Ingeborg.

"What makes you think I wouldn't?" demanded Nip.

Ingeborg put a small packet, newspaper

wrapped, into the sheriff's hands. "I found this in the girdle of a silk dress of mine I haven't worn since I came here. There is a good deal of gold there."

Brody took the parcel, his eyes puzzled. Ingeborg's lips tightened. "I play the game straight, sheriff," she said.

Nip shook his head to himself and opened the door into a large square room, the windows of which looked out on the palm-trees.

"Make you acquainted with Judge Hill, Miss Olson. Judge ain't any lawyer, but he's been a cowman all his life and that's why we have confidence in him."

A small gray-bearded man, his brown eyes set in sun wrinkles, rose from his desk to shake hands with Ingeborg.

"I don't like to try this kind of a case, Miss," he said soberly. " 'Tain't natural. 'Tain't right." He looked Ingeborg over keenly. "You'd ought to have refused to have anything to do with it."

"I know I appear in a bad light," replied Ingeborg, squaring her shoulders. "Has my father a lawyer, judge?"

"No! He's ugly and refuses to have one, and won't produce any witnesses. I've set the trial for two this afternoon, and if you folks have got any witnesses you'd better produce 'em because, come hell or high water, I'm going to shoot this case off my calendar before it's besmirched it for twenty-four hours."

"We'll be ready, your honor."

Still scowling, the judge turned to the sheriff. "Nip, I want the courtroom kept cleared this afternoon. There's nobody going to get any more cheap notoriety out of this case than I can help."

"That ain't a bad idea either, Sim!" agreed the sheriff. "Miss Olson, is there anything else I can do for you?"

"Show me a room in the court-house where I can stay until two o'clcok, and get a boy to bring me over some sandwiches from the hotel."

"I sure will!" exclaimed the sheriff, leading the way down the corridor to a small office unfurnished save for a dusty table and chair.

PROMPTLY at two Ingeborg appeared in the courtroom. Her father and mother were seated in wooden chairs just beyond the judge's right hand. Ole returned a scowl to Ingeborg's nod, while Olga covered her twitching face with her gnarled fingers.

"Now then, where is this fellow Cresswell?" demanded the judge.

"The two partners haven't appeared as yet, your Honor," said Ingeborg. "I've telephoned the mine and find that neither Mr. Evans nor Mr. Cresswell has been seen since last night. They have started a hunt for them, but till now they have found no trace of either man. I wish to beg of the court that the trial be postponed another day."

"Nothing doing!" snapped Judge Hill. "Anything else?"

"No," replied Ingeborg, "except that I have turned over to Sheriff Brody the nuggets which the accused had secreted."

Ole jumped from his seat. "It's a lie. She——"

"Sit down!" thundered the judge. "You keep your fool mouth shut or you'll land yourself in jail yet! Anything else?"

"Nothing," said Ingeborg, "except the information I had from Mr. Evans and Mr. Cresswell. They state——"

"Don't want to hear it!" snorted the judge. "Nothing but first-hand evidence goes in this case."

"But your honor," pleaded Ingeborg, "this is not customary court procedure!"

"What the deuce do I care?" shouted the little man. "As Brody told you, I'm a cowman and not a lawyer. That's why the people elected me to this job. And let me tell you, my girl, that if I allowed you to send your father to jail, you and I would both be run out of the county. Now I'll give you until two-thirty to produce your witnesses. If they're not here by then, the case is quashed."

"I'd like to be excused to telephone again, your Honor," said Ingeborg.

The judge nodded and turned to a whispered conversation with Brody. On the stroke of the half-hour, Ingeborg came slowly into the courtroom.

"The two men have not been located, your Honor," she said.

"That's good!" grunted the judge. "Brody, you give back the gold to its owners. Mr. Olson, the court is going to be easy with you this time, but if you offend again you get the limit, lungs or no lungs. My advice to you is that you go back to Olla and live this down. If I know Heber

Evans, he'll do all he can to help you, if you show a decent spirit. This case is thrown out of court."

The judge walked hurriedly out of the room. Ingeborg turned to Olga. "Mother," she began eagerly, "will you——"

"You let us alone, Ingeborg," barked Ole.

Olga looked at her daughter with an expression half wistful, half resentful.

"Your father ben first with me, Ingeborg," she said.

"Yes," returned Ingeborg bitterly. "I ought to know that by this time. I count only as the wage-earner and very little as that."

She stared at her mother for a long minute, then she turned to the sheriff. "Will you see that my mother gets home comfortably?"

"Yup!" replied Nip. "Your horse has been fed and watered and is tied under the palm-trees. Where in time do you suppose Linc and Heber are? I don't like the look of it. There was bad blood there."

Ingeborg nodded. "I'm going to try to find out what happened."

"I'll be on the job long before you are," said Nip.

And indeed the sheriff's car passed Ingeborg and the gray mare before they were a mile on the long, sandy trail to Olla.

IT SEEMED to Ingeborg, pounding slowly back on her tired horse, with sand clouds powdering her face, that she had lived a a lifetime since Cresswell had come to her office on the previous day. She could recall no detail of the ride over in the morning; but now she looked about her. Far and wide, a vast and billowy yellow ocean, tormented, rock riven and lonely; lonely beyond the power of words to express. To the north the clear blue line of the mountains rose, with the single great rift in which lay Olla.

By now, Ingeborg thought, Olla had crossed her definitely from its social and professional list and she herself by every ordinary criterion should be sick of Olla and eager to return to the north. And yet such was not the case. Quite aside from her stony determination to win and hold her place in Olla was a yearning to stay in this brilliant, lonely, burning country; a type of yearning utterly alien to any of Ingeborg's previous experience.

It was dark when she stabled her horse at the Rainy Day corral. There was a light in the office and she rapped at the door.

"Come in!" called Evans.

The partners were sitting at their respective desks. Cresswell nodded in a surly way, but Heber rose.

"Hello, Miss Olson! You've had a hard trip! Sorry! Lincoln and I had a bit of business on hand that prevented our getting over to Palomas. Nip tells us that Judge Hill threw the case out of court."

Ingeborg looked from one to the other. "Yes," she repeated quietly, "he threw it out of court. I—I'm a little tired, so if you'll excuse me, I won't discuss the removal of my father with you to-night. Good night!"

"I'll walk up with you," said Heber, picking up his hat. "I just wanted to explain," he went on as they started up the trail. "I was determined not to be even an unwilling party to such a case. We went up to the Frangi Panni to see just how much gold your father had dug out and I kept Cresswell there till he promised to be good. You see, I've learned even more than you have about him lately. It was a great surprise to him. He'll be good, all right!"

Suddenly Ingeborg laughed. "Desert justice! Of all the outrageous procedure, yours and Judge Hill's exceed anything in my experience!"

"The only outrageous procedure in the whole matter has been yours!" declared Heber.

"Oh, you don't understand!" protested Ingeborg.

"Only dimly," admitted Heber. "And Olla doesn't understand at all."

"Some day you and Olla will believe in me all the more for this!" But Ingeborg sighed as she spoke.

"You are half dead!" exclaimed Heber. "I'm not going to make you talk any more." And shaking hands warmly, he was gone.

Ingeborg came into the kitchen slowly. Her father and mother were at supper. No one spoke. Ingeborg went into her room and came out shortly wearing a gingham dress that softened her stalwart lines into curves of appealing beauty. She ate her supper in silence and helped her mother clear up the dishes, then she said in a casual voice:

"My idea is that we ask Mr. Evans to let us move back into our old tents."

Ole, his gaunt, broken face a ghastly white in the lamplight, looked at Ingeborg uncertainly.

"You mean you think you're going on living with me after what you done to me?"

"What I've done to you, father, is less than justice."

"Yustice! Yustice! Is it yustice to disgrace your father?" Ole pounded on the table with his clenched fist.

"You disgraced yourself," returned Ingeborg coldly. "As far as I am concerned, I can suffer no more in Olla with a thief for a father than I did in Madison, where you were known as a miser and a wife-beater."

"Why don't you get out? Get out and leave us to go home?" roared Ole.

"One reason is that I promised mother years ago that I'd stick by her till she died. I want you to go to the partners, father, and ask them to rent us the tents again."

"Never! Never!" croaked Ole. "I want to go home to Madison."

"Oh, Ingeborg! Let us go home!" pleaded her mother.

"Father would die in six weeks at home. Here he has a fighting chance to live. We'll stay in Olla and see it through," Ingeborg said wearily.

"If I'd had six weeks more here," began Ole. Then a violent fit of coughing strangled him and a gush of blood burst from his lips. Both women sprang to his aid.

It was midnight when, her father finally quiet and asleep, Ingeborg crept into bed.

The next morning she waited for the partners to emerge from the company dining-room, then she followed them into the office.

"I should appreciate it very much," she said, "if you would allow us to rent the three tents again. I know that the request seems impertinent, but I will vouch for my father's good behavior."

"I'm perfectly willing, Miss Olson," answered Heber, while Cresswell shrugged his shoulders.

"My father," Ingeborg spoke tonelessly, "will not be out of bed for a month at least. He had another hemorrhage last night."

"Poor old chap!" Evans shook his head. "Can you move him safely?"

"Not safely for several days."

"Then leave him where he is until he won't suffer from the change. I guess the free gold in the Frangi Panni is safe!" Heber half smiled. "Eh, Cresswell?"

"I wash my hands of the whole matter," grunted Cresswell. "If Miss Olson will keep her hands off me, I'll keep my hands off her."

Ingeborg gave him a clear look, then turned to Heber, who was watching her with a look of mingled thoughtfulness and wistfulness in his deep-set brown eyes.

"Thank you very much," she said and she went out and saddled the gray mare.

THAT day no one came near her office until mid-afternoon. Then Nip Brody dropped in, a cigarette hanging out of his mouth. Ingeborg provided no cuspidor for her visitors.

"Well," exclaimed the sheriff, "you sure have got your share of free advertising since you first wafted yourself and family into Olla!"

"I certainly did not seek it," returned Ingeborg. "Sit down, sheriff. There are matches in that ash-tray."

Nip draped his lean body on the kitchen chair, tilted it back at a dangerous angle and blew some smoke at the ceiling.

"All the women are against you. They say that you haven't any more heart than an Apache Indian. When you ask 'em if that's what they want in a lawyer, heart, they sniff and say that heart's what a real woman has to have. Don't smile! Don't forget that these days every one of these fair females from a chicken like Molly Fish to an ancient buzzard like Mrs. Haskins casts a perfectly good, readable vote!"

Nip paused to puff on his cigarette, studying Ingeborg with ruminative eyes.

"Now the men folks, on the other hand, they feel pretty sad over your lack of heart, you understand, but every one of 'em jerks their head and says, 'By the limping piper, I believe you could trust her to dole out real law! She hands it even to her own father!' So there you are! Families are being busted up. Husband is striving against wife and sweetheart against sweetheart. All because you're lined with ice! But listen! There is five men in our grand little city to one woman. Get me?"

"No, I don't," replied Ingeborg.

"Well, John Haskins's committee calls the town organization meeting next week. Among other folks to be elected will be a justice of the peace. Why don't you run for it? Hanged if I wouldn't trust you some as a judge myself. I don't know and none of us can guess just how much of it was smartness; but by heck! if you'd come here and been a perfectly nice female lawyer all dimples and la-de-da, folks would have been joshing about you yet! But not you! You stampede 'em by getting the law on your own father and they're scandalized, but they've forgot all the la-de-da stuff. Yes, ma'am!"

"Mr. Brody," said Ingeborg with deep earnestness, "I did what I did with no thought in my mind save that the very cornerstone of justice is that law be enforced without fear or favor."

The sheriff looked at her with equal earnestness. "Miss Olson," he said, "it can't be done! It never has been done. Human beings ain't made that way. You got to adjust the law to the case in hand. At least if you don't do it down in this desert country you don't last long. After you've been a judge a little while, you'll come to that."

"But you just told me," protested Ingeborg, "that I'd won the confidence of the public by administering cold justice!"

After a moment the sheriff said: "I bet Heber regrets taking that fellow Cresswell in as a partner. He's a bad egg, that man! Watch out for Cresswell—you and Heber both. Of course, Heber's darned well able to take care of himself. For all he's so gentle-like, he's got the temper of a wild stallion once it's roused. He'd just as soon kill a man as look at him, once he lets go. But I don't know about you. Do you carry a gun?"

"Pshaw, sheriff!" exclaimed Ingeborg. "This isn't 1849!"

"No, but it's the desert," returned Nip, "and this here protection of the law don't amount to a hoop-la in Hades, once the desert gets either a man or a woman."

Ingeborg looked from her window, where, past the corner of Gilbert's store, she saw the gateway of the pass and the eternal yellow ocean burning beyond. Something stirred within her, something that just for a moment made her law seem small and futile. She nodded faintly as she turned back to the sheriff.

"We'll hope I'll never have to carry a gun, sheriff!" she said; and she picked up a law book, while Brody went thoughtfully out of the office.

WHEN it became noised about Olla that Ingeborg was running for justice of the peace, the interest in candidates for other offices was entirely eclipsed. For a week, tongues wagged furiously, man against woman, as Nip Brody had reported. Both Brody and Haskins wanted Ingeborg to make some speeches. This she refused to do.

"I'm no orator," she said. "I'd only make myself ridiculous. I'll make one statement from the steps of the post-office the day before election telling people what I think my qualifications are. Then I'm through. I'm not even going to the meeting. I don't want to hear what they say about me."

And with this her two backers were obliged to be content.

It was mid-afternoon when Ingeborg made her statement: an afternoon of desert spring with shadows clear and hard on the sand. It was very hot and the wind twisted the dust up and down the street in endless whirling spirals. The entire population of Olla, including babes in arms and burros, attended the meeting. There had been no such excitement in Olla since ten years before when a Mexican had been lynched in old Gilbert's corral.

Ingeborg's statement consumed about three minutes of time. Heber Evans, standing in the crowd, had heard it before in another form, but he was struck anew by the singular persuasiveness of Ingeborg's sincerity. She stood in her immaculate blouse and the familiar white stock, her well-fitting skirt, her beautiful braids dancing in a thousand golden lights, her deep blue eyes unblanching in the blazing sun. And there seemed to the man something so noble in the viking figure that he quietly removed his hat to listen to her words.

"I was born and brought up in Madison, Wisconsin. I am twenty-eight years old. I am a farmer's daughter. I can make butter and do plain cooking and sewing. I know how people who work with their hands look at life. My father supported me while I went through the high school. I walked in to it three miles every day. I earned my own way through college by acting as stenographer and secretary to a law firm. During my two-year law course I acted as clerk for this firm and there learned the practical details of handling cases.

"I practised law in Madison for three years. I defended a man accused of murder and won the case. I handled a number of divorce cases with success. I represented eight different business houses and handled considerable litigation for them. I will not weary you with more details of my business, which was heavy, when my father's sickness forced me to give it up.

"I believe I would make a competent judge because of my life training and because justice should be administered without fear or favor. Thank you all for listening to me!" She turned abruptly and ascended the stairs to her office.

It was long before the crowd dispersed.

"Lord knows she's big enough for two judges," said Mrs. Gilbert.

"I never saw a blonde yet you could trust," contributed Mrs. Fish.

"Her face is as cold as ice. She'd hang a baby just as quick as she would her own father." This from the landlady of the hotel.

"She ain't got any more expression or character in her face than a piece of chewing-gum," said Mrs. Haskins.

"Aw, shucks!" exclaimed Molly Fish. "She's good-looking in her big way. We might as well acknowledge that and that she's as smart as lightning, too."

"Just because she did some snooping for you, Molly Fish—" began Mrs. Haskins, when her husband interrupted her.

"Now listen, ma! You women folks don't get the idea. Here's Olla. Nobody never heard of Olla, we didn't even think of Olla ourselves, till she came here. She put it on the map, whether you like the way she did it or not. Why, there was that piece in the San Francisco *Chronicle* last week about her and her dad. Regular printed stuff read by thousands about this doggone little jumping-off place. And now if we go ahead and elect her justice of the peace, we'll be the only town in this section of the country, maybe in the whole country, that's got a woman justice of the peace. Talk about booming a town! Ain't that progress? Why, I tell you Olla'd be the most modern place in this country."

"Pooh!" snorted Mrs. Haskins. "I suppose it would be worth while to have a big blonde hang babies just to boom Olla! Come on, girls! We'll show how we feel when we cast our vote!"

And the session was ended.

TRUE to her word, Ingeborg did not attend the town meeting. She spent the early part of the evening in the living-tent with her father and mother. Ole was slowly picking up again; but there was a cessation of hostilities, for the time being at least, between him and Ingeborg. He was very weak and perhaps he, like Ingeborg, was beginning to respond to the vague call of the desert. At any rate, while there was no friendliness, there was at least no quarreling between them.

Her father and mother went to bed early and Ingeborg wandered out under the stars to wait for Heber, who was to bring her word of the result of the voting. In spite of her keen interest in the election, the young lawyer was singularly at peace. For the first time in all her driven life, her nerves were relaxing. She was conscious of the nearness of the stars and of the intimacy of the desert wind. Poverty-stricken as was the life in Olla, harsh as were its judgments, it was kinder to her than ever the north had been. Even Cersswell's hostility seemed to have lessened into a silent withdrawal and nothing more. And Ingeborg paced slowly up and down the trail with a deep content creeping into her heart.

When she heard the far *chug-chug* of the automobile, she started down the trail to meet it. Heber stopped the car with a jerk.

"Good evening, judge!"

"Oh, did they really elect me?" cried Ingeborg.

"If by 'they' you mean the men, yes! I don't think you got even one woman's vote, unless it was Molly's."

"I'm sorry!" exclaimed Ingeborg. "But I do believe they'll feel differently when they come to know me, Mr. Evans." She came close to the car and looked up into his face. "I'm going to do my best to be a good judge."

Heber, taking in the fine earnestness of her eyes, drew a quick breath. "I know you will," he said in a low voice. "Get in and I'll tell you all about it."

"I don't think I want to hear the details," said Ingeborg as she stepped lightly into the car. "It would just prejudice me. I know all I want to know. I am going to be Olla's justice of the peace. I don't know why I love that rather horrid little town."

"It's the desert that's getting you, not Olla. And the more it gets you the less easy it's going to be for you to dispense your cold justice."

"Oh, I hope not!" protested Ingeborg.

"I hope it will be!" smiled Heber. "I'm selfish about it. It is going to make a great difference in my life if you remain a Snow Maiden."

"Don't!" cried Ingeborg. "Oh, don't! We are such good friends! You are my only friend down here. And I always shall be a Snow Maiden as far as anything else is concerned."

"I'm banking on the desert's aid," said Heber as he brought the car up before Ingeborg's tent. "Good night, judge!"

"Good night!" returned Ingeborg.

Olla, once it was organized, was not so slow as might have been expected. The Palace Saloon having ceased business with the arrival of the national drought, it was decided to turn that barn-like structure into a composite town-hall and court-house. During the weeks that would be consumed in making the changes, Ingeborg was to hold court in her office.

Not that holding court became immediately a matter of overwhelming business. But little by little petty spites and differences began to drift into Ingeborg's cool hands. Olla's curiosity and resentment subsided and a silent but none the less real confidence in the new judge began to soften even the women. Ole, lying on his cot, was forgotten. After all, stealing ore was neither an infrequent nor a heinous crime in the mind of Olla. But Ingeborg was conscious that the rift between the partners never had healed. She knew by many quiet signs that it increased daily in depth and bitterness. She realized, as Nip had said, that between two such alien natures as Heber's and Lincoln's bad blood was inevitable.

ALL one burning morning in June Ingeborg listened to the stupid details of a lawsuit which the owner of the Palace Hotel was bringing against John Haskins. At noon she went over to the corral to water her horse, when Sheriff Brody galloped up.

"Judge," he whispered hoarsely as he dismounted, "Lincoln Cresswell was killed this morning!"

"Where?" gasped Ingeborg.

"Up at the Bright Hope mine. He and Evans went up there early. It's been abandoned for years, but Heber was talking about getting the zinc out of her. I wanted to see him on business and followed up there. I found Cresswell dead, with a bullet in his lung, just outside the shaft. There was no sign of Heber."

"I want you to come up and help me to look things over before it gets out," Nip went on. "You are the only person in Olla who won't blab. I'll take my car."

"But it's not my—" began Ingeborg.

The sheriff seized her by the arm. "I don't give a hang about anything! Heber Evans is my friend and I ain't going to have every one in Olla in on this. Understand?"

"No, I don't," said Ingeborg shortly. Then, white to the lips, she added, "Let me get my hat."

There were few to observe the judge and the sheriff in their dash out of town; for it was the siesta hour, during which even Olla's main business, that of minding other folks affairs, was neglected. They followed the main traveled road three miles to the north of the town, then turned abruptly on to a rough, half-obliterated trail. They followed this for some distance, until Nip stopped the car at the foot of a precipitous mountainside.

"It's a matter of scramble on all fours now," he said, getting out of the car. "The old trail washed out years ago."

Ingeborg followed the sheriff without a word. He led the way up and up, now clinging desperately to projecting roots, now calling warningly back to Ingeborg as sand and rock gave way beneath his feet. After fifteen or twenty minutes of this they reached a broad bench at the back of which the mountain again arose abruptly. In the mountainside on the level of the bench gaped the black mouth of a tunnel. They crossed the level slowly.

Seated against the doorway, his legs straight before him, his head on his chest, was Lincoln Cresswell. There was a huge red stain on the breast of his outing-shirt.

There was no sign of a struggle. A miner's candlestick with an unburned candle in it lay on the stones beside him.

Ingeborg looked from the pathetic broken figure to the surrounding rock. "No sand to tell tales here," she said softly. "Did you look in the mine?"

"No! I had no candles and I didn't want to touch his. But I'm fixed now. Come along!" He lighted two candles, giving Ingeborg one, and she followed him gingerly into the tunnel. "It's a crazy rabbit-warren of a place," he said as he moved slowly along a black passage. "Ain't a timber or a beam in the whole place, I guess. Some bum miners worked her for free gold years ago and she's safe for neither man nor beast. Luckily, there ain't much of it."

The tunnel narrowed at this point and they both dropped to their knees. After five minutes of crawling, Nip called: "Careful now, Judge! There's a short shaft here. I'll go first to be sure the ladder's safe. Test each step as you find it. Remember neither you nor I are feather-weights!"

Ingeborg set her teeth and, the candlelight dancing on her white face, made her way gingerly down the ladder. She found Nip waiting for her in a small central chamber out of which there were two openings.

"Now," he said, "if we follow into either one of them openings long enough, we'll come out of the other. It sure is angleworm business. Are you game?" looking curiously at the young judge's tense lips and at the blue eyes in which a strange light burned.

She nodded. Nip dropped to his knees and Ingeborg saw his gaunt frame silhouetted uncertainly before her. She was sure of very little afterward save that Heber was not in the mine. Crawling up and down hot, narrowing passages, dropping into strange, rough pits, clambering desperately over fallen débris until it seemed to her that she could do no more, her mind seemed to take in no details. She only know that Heber was not there. Finally, they crawled once more into the central chamber. Sheriff Brody stretched himself with a groan, then started up the ladder. Shortly they were once more in the blinding sunlight beside poor Cresswell.

"You are a dead game sport, Judge!" exclaimed the sheriff. "Now, let's scour the outside of the mine for evidence."

This did not take long. The mine had long since been robbed of all its buildings. When they had done, Nip turned to Ingeborg, "Do you think you can help me to get Lincoln down to the car?"

Ingeborg hesitated, then squared her shoulders. "I'm plenty strong enough," she said, "if you'll show me just how you want it done."

Rolled in blankets and for the most part lowered by ropes, it was not difficult to land poor Cresswell in the tonneau of the car. The sheriff cranked the engine and started slowly back to Olla.

"A good clean job," said Nip. "He didn't leave a trace behind him. Chose a spot where stones tell no tales and took the gun with him. I wonder what they rowed about."

Ingeborg did not reply and the ride was finished in silence. They drew up before old Gilbert's store. At Nip's call, old Gilbert waddled out on to the steps.

"Trouble, Gil! Cresswell's in back there, dead as old Geronimo. Someone shot him at the Bright Hope this morning."

"You don't say!" The old man's eyes watered. "Got him under the blankets, eh?" He turned and called, "Molly, get out the board and trestles!" Then he descended ponderously to the automobile.

Ingeborg put her hand on the sheriff's arm. "You'd better get on the telephone as quickly as you can, had you not?"

"I'll be right up," said Nip, who now had a desk and a telephone in Ingeborg's office.

When Ingeborg looked from her window a moment later, the population of Olla was running from all directions toward the store.

ALL that bright afternoon, while Brody organized his posses, while the telephone rang ceaselessly, the young judge sat at her desk, apparently immersed in the details of the Haskins-Murphy suit. But as a matter of fact not a word of the papers she perused so carefully registered on Ingeborg's brain. All that she saw was Heber's eagle face, with the wistful humor in the deep-set brown eyes and the uncompromising rigor of the thin, long jaw.

Had they quarreled about her? Surely not; for since she had ceased to care for the Rainy Day's affairs she had been no cause for contention. And while she had been the cause of the original split between the partners she knew that with the development of Cresswell's loose characteristics a split would have been inevitable on other grounds. And she must hold the preliminary hearing! She must bind Heber Evans over to be tried for his life! And suddenly the very bitterness of purgatory surged through Ingeborg's mind.

The posses clattered and honked out of town. The crowd in front of Gilbert's was depleted by the withdrawal of the women folks to prepare supper. Molly Fish, her eyes red with weeping, crossed the street to the post-office with a black ribbon on her arm. Finally Ingeborg rose and put on her hat once more.

A dozen people surrounded her as she started toward the corral. "Where did she think Evans was? What had they quarreled about? Why did they hate each other?"

Ingeborg shook her head vehemently. "No! No!" she said to each question. "I must not express an opinion. You must let me remain as unprejudiced as possible." And finally they let her go on and saddle the gray mare.

WHEN she had finished her supper, the judge went slowly out into the sunset. She made her way through rock and sand to the edge of the mesa where she could have an unobstructed view of the desert. It was a crimson desert now with a million orange motes dancing above it and merging into the pale-blue zenith.

Ingeborg seated herself on a rock and rested her chin on her palm, elbow on knee. She felt suddenly as if that quivering crimson beauty were shaking her very soul, as if it were bearing her upward and outward on its burning waves. Heber had warned her that the desert would absorb her, she reminded herself. Was his prophecy coming true? Her cheeks burned crimson with something deeper than the reflection of the afterglow. She gave a groan that was half a sob. Never again would Heber share the desert's beauty with her. He was a felon now—a murderer whom she must find and turn over to justice!

"I hope they'll never find him!" she said aloud.

Then she jumped to her feet appalled. To what extreme had this desert madness driven her? Was she who always had worshiped cold justice about to lose her high ideal and permit sentiment to besmirch the clear page of her sense of honor? She clasped her strong white hands against her throat.

"I've come to care for him!" she whispered. "I've let myself get to care for him. O God, what shall I do now?"

Suddenly she began to pace up and down the edge of the mesa like a mad woman, wringing her hands, moaning half-articulate condemnation of herself, half-sobbing terms of endearment for Heber.

For an hour the storm raged, and it was a devastating one. It shook to its very foundations the carefully reared domicile of Ingeborg's life. The cold, dispassionate energy that had carried her through the desolate days of her girlhood was waging a new battle. And it was a battle with the greatest force in the world, the force on which life rests, the force that is a mighty tide of rapture and desire which may flood once the hearts of men and women. And while that tide is at its height only the heart thrice bound with the bronze of a mighty will and with ambitions clean-cut and steel-reinforced can withstand its bursting pressure.

Hour after hour Ingeborg paced the mesa edge. The stars glowed down on her, but she did not heed them. The faint call of a coyote pack sounded high above the pass. She did not hear it. But toward midnight the battle was over. Spent and weary, but without a tear, Ingeborg sank upon a stone. A lifetime of habit, an ambition that was as burning in its intensity as Ole's love of gold, had thrust back the flood and Ingeborg was not a woman but a judge again. After she had rested for a time she went back to her tent.

THE next morning at breakfast her mother asked her timidly if she were ill. Ingeborg shook her head. Her father looked at her with a curious gleam in his eyes.

"You didn't look that way when you had to put me in jail," he said.

Ingeborg replied irritably: "I was sick with worry at having to prosecute you. Don't make me out a monster!"

Ole's look of curiosity changed to one of astonishment. But he said nothing more, and Ingeborg left the breakfast-table without touching anything but her coffee.

And all day long Heber's thin face and wistful, deep-seeing eyes came between the judge and the people who haunted the courtroom. As the hours passed Ingeborg's own face grew grimmer and more grim until it resembled nothing so closely as that of a stormy viking woman set to face the perils of the great deep.

That night she sat longer than usual with her father and mother. Ole was daily growing stronger and Olga was correspondingly more cheerful. He had been up and around all day. Ole would not let Ingeborg alone on the details of the search and Ingeborg answered his questions patiently enough. She was conscious of the fact that she was less belligerent toward her father than she ever had been in her life. But one can not contain more than one passion at a time, she told herself, and her resentment toward her father had been a passion until her love for Heber had given it second place.

When, after a time, a short silence fell, Ingeborg broke it by saying again, "It's not like him to hide."

Ole stared at her, then slowly nodded his head. "You're right, Ingeborg. Now listen! Maybe I ain't always been what you call good, but maybe that yust makes me like a good man better. And I'm telling you that he knew he was yustified in killing Cresswell."

"If he was, the jury will find him not guilty," said Ingeborg.

"If he was, you should never send him before a jury!" cried Ole.

"Let him go! He was so good to us, Ingeborg!" pleaded Olga.

"You talk as if I were holding him!" exclaimed Ingeborg impatiently. "If you would only try to understand my position! I am not a person or a friend. I am the law. And if I knew his hiding-place, I'd be obliged to tell it and have him arrested. The very foundations of the nation rest on our judiciary being incorruptible. Even a petty little justice of the peace must be straight. If I knew his hiding-place——"

She paused abruptly. After she had crawled through the Bright Hope, she had thought that no detail of the miserable winding tunnels had stayed with her. But now, with inexplicable vividness, the dirty gray central chamber flashed before her inward vision.

"I wonder if the sheriff knew that place less well than he thought he did or if—Perhaps he led me through as a blind and he knows that Heber is somewhere in the Bright Hope. Brody was up there before he came for me, and he has forbidden any of the searchers to go into the tunnel for fear, he says, that they will destroy possible evidence."

She rose abruptly. "I may be off early in the morning, mother. If I am, don't wait breakfast for me," and she went out into the night.

She stood for a long time staring at the evening star which hung low and glowing over the mesa edge. Then she went into her tent and to bed. But she could not sleep. That picture of the Bright Hope would not leave her. It was not yet midnight when she rose and dressed herself. She stole into the living-tent and made herself some sandwiches, filled her pockets with candles and then saddled the gray mare.

THE climb up to the Bright Hope in the night was strenuous; but driven by a force she could neither resist nor understand, Ingeborg reached the tunnel opening in an incredibly short time. She lighted a candle and without a glance at the spot where poor Cresswell had sat she entered the tunnel and made her way to the central chamber.

She was trembling a little as she held her candle aloft and studied the walls. The silence was absolute. The gray-and-brown walls, veined with black, with pick and drill mark, thick with dust, were unbroken save for the two openings one of which Nip had said had been their exit, the other their entrance.

But with her new suspicion of Nip she asked herself if they really had gone in one way and out the other. Or had the sheriff been bluffing her and cleverly concealing Heber? She and the sheriff had entered the opening at the left of the ladder. Ingeborg set her teeth and made her way into the opening at the right.

The passage in which she found herself sloped gently downward. She could walk, but was obliged to bend from the waist. The grease from the candle ran over her hand and splashed on her boots. Sweat trickled from her chin as the heat increased. She had no idea of how far on and down this strange passageway led. She did not know whether or not she and the sheriff had traversed it. But it led on so steadily that she grew careless and did not heed the signs of danger in the increasing amount of crumbled stone that cumbered the floor. She climbed on automatically, always listening, listening, always pressing on and on until, without warning, a rock heap she was climbing gave way with her and she plunged into blackness.

Ingeborg was not hurt by the fall, but she lay half-stunned for a minute, blinking into the darkness and still listening, listening, while she panted with the heat. When her dizziness passed, she lighted another candle with fingers that trembled. Then she took a long drink from her canteen, which she retrieved from the mass of rock on which she lay.

"It's a frightful place," she said aloud. "I hate it."

But it did not occur to her to turn back, though she held her candle up to see if the way was clear after her fall. The passage was blocked by a great block of ore. Ingeborg crawled with infinite difficulty up over the débris that she had brought down with her in her six or eight foot plunge. She put her shoulder against the block. She could not budge it. Just for a moment the blood left her heart. Then she said aloud:

"I must not lose my head. If the sheriff didn't lie to me, I'll come out at the left-hand exit if I keep on going. And that's what I'll do."

She slid down to the foot of the débris and looked at her watch. It was three o'clock. She slung the canteen so that it would not hinder her movements and dropped to her knees; for the entrance to the continuation passage was very low. She was very tired and she began to rest at intervals, her long, strong body stretched on the dusty floor, the candle flickering on her golden braids as she listened, listened.

Until four o'clock Ingeborg crawled onward. And then it seemed to her that she could do no more. She lay flat with her face on her arms. And lying so, the heat and the silence became one horrible monster to her excited fancy and suddenly the fear of smothering which every miner knows gripped her and unbalanced her self-control.

She began to fight the walls that so closely hemmed her in. She struck them with her clenched fists. She kicked them and threw her body against them. But this did not last long. A life-long habit of self-control is a very firm rock in time of panic. Gradually a sense of shame brought sanity to Ingeborg. With set teeth she took her candle in her bleeding fingers and crept onward until once more the heat and weariness compelled her to rest while she listened, listened.

AND thus, faint and delicate as her own heart-beats, Ingeborg heard a call. She lifted the candle and crept on. The passage suddenly widened and she rose to her feet, breaking into a run. When she paused again, the call was clear.

"Help! Help!"

"Coming!" shouted Ingeborg, starting on more slowly; for the walls were narrowing down again. "Where are you?" she called.

"In a pit! Move carefully!" replied Heber's hoarse voice from beyond and below her. "The passage ends here in a sheer fifteen-foot drop without warning."

Ingeborg peered carefully over the edge of the drop. Dimly below Heber's haggard face peered up at her.

"I knew it would be you, Judge!" he said brokenly. "Can you spare some water?"

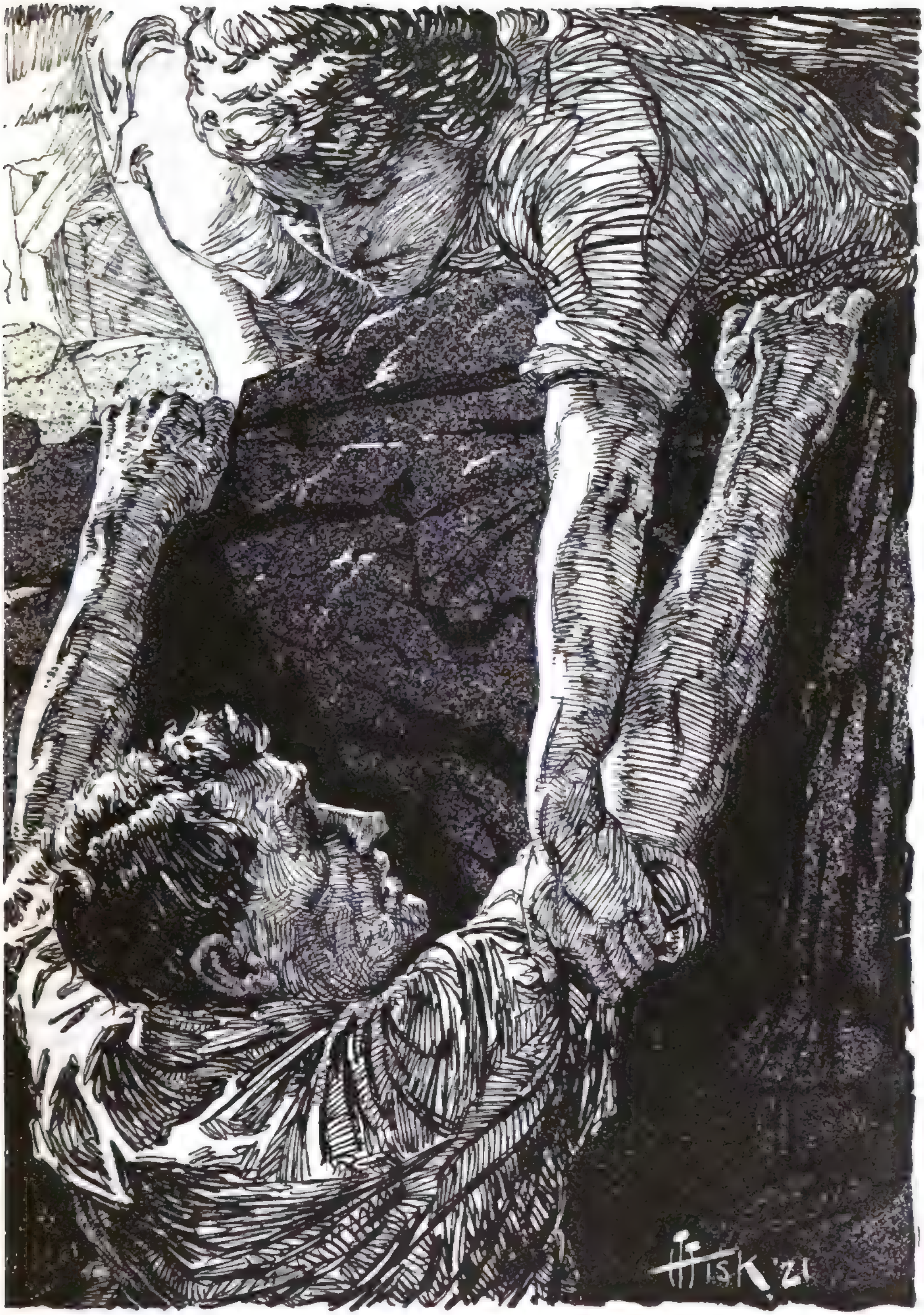
Ingeborg unslung her canteen and dropped it into the darkness below. She tied some matches and a candle in her handkerchief and tossed it down. "Make a light!" she said. In a moment the pit was illuminated. There was an empty canteen, a broken knife and some cigarette stubs on the floor. Heber, unshaven, his hair wet with sweat, stared up at her as if he were looking once more at the free light of day.

"I broke my knife and I couldn't scale the wall at any point," he said. "Where are the others?"

"There are no others," replied Ingeborg. "I came on alone. But if you are not too weak, I should be able to help you out. This pit seems to be the end of the passage. The passage behind me is blocked, too. There was quite a slide."

"You're hurt!" exclaimed Heber looking at her bloody hands.

"No, I'm not. Did you have any food with you?"



There was a fierce scramble, one bad moment when his foothold failed him and it seemed to the judge as if her arms must be wrenched from their sockets.

"I had a lunch and this big canteen held out until last night or at least whatever twelve hours ago was. I'm not in bad shape, but it hasn't been a pleasant experience at all. Did Cresswell have an accident too? He was to take the other passage. Why didn't the rotter come to look for me?"

Ingeborg looked at him curiously. "Let's get you up here before we talk. Your experience may find a way to open the passage."

"Well," said Heber, "there are the two canteen straps and our two leather belts. Lower your belt with your cravat tied to it and— Wait! Let me toss up my canteen strap, then you can lower for your canteen. There is nothing up there, of course, to hitch to!"

Ingeborg shook her head. "I can lie with my arms over the edge and hang on," she said.

"I don't need to put my full weight on." Heber was removing his belt. "The wall is rough enough for sort of toe-holds if I can brace myself against the strap. Even at that, it's going to be a terrible strain on you!"

"What of it!" exclaimed Ingeborg impatiently.

She lay down and thrust her arms over the edge of the pit, twisting the edge of the improvised rope firmly around her hands. Heber grasped the opposite end. There was a fierce scramble, one bad moment when his foothold failed him and it seemed to the judge as if her arms must be wrenched from their sockets, and then Heber had fallen beside her. He lay panting and speechless for a full minute.

"The air is very bad," said Ingeborg finally.

"Yes!" gasped Heber. "That new slide is impeding what small circulation there was. We must husband that water, but I guess you'd better spare me one more swallow."

Ingeborg gave him the canteen promptly, at the same time taking a small package from her pocket. "I brought a few sandwiches along. Let's have breakfast."

Heber looked at the food with bloodshot, weary eyes. "Better go easy on those. The Lord knows how long we may be shut up in here."

"It can't be very long. I left the gray mare standing at the foot of the trail. Some one will see her."

"How long have you been in here?" asked Heber, taking one of the sandwiches.

"Since midnight. The sheriff and I came in on the morning he found Cresswell, but although he said we'd gone through the mine, we were not in this passage at all."

As she spoke, the judge was watching Heber closely. He was sitting with his back against the wall, his miner's candlestick stuck in a crevice beside him. His thin, eager features were thrown into sharp relief against the blackness of the pit. Ingeborg leaned against the opposite wall, her hands clasped around her knees.

"Found Cresswell!" exclaimed Heber. "Then there was an accident! What happened? And why has no one come for me before? It's a small mine!"

"Supposing," said the judge, "that you tell me first what happened to you."

HEBER stared at her as though he were making note of her evasive manner, but he answered readily enough.

"We wanted to look the mine over and came up early, to avoid the heat. The gossip has always been that the two main passages formed a loop and we agreed to take a passage each and meet in the middle. I started in while Linc was still fussing with his candle and compass and the Lord knows what all. You know how slow he is. Then I fell down this hole and lay stunned for I don't know how long. My watch stopped with the jolt. I got her to going again, but I don't know how much off she is. Now, what about Cresswell?"

Ingeborg did not reply at once. She sat looking at Heber as if she never had seen him before. Unshaven, grimy, sweat-stained, yet with that something free and high of the eagle in him untainted and unquenched, it seemed to her that she could not endure the thought of what lay before her. She suddenly twisted her hands together, clasped them behind her head and groaned.

Instantly Heber was on his knees beside her. "Ingeborg, what is it?"

"Don't touch me!" she gasped. "I couldn't bear it. Don't let's talk about the case. If I've got to try you, I want to know nothing, not even as much as you told me. I can't bear to have you lie to me."

Heber crouched back on his haunches and

glared at the judge through half-closed eyes. "What are you talking about—trying me! Did Cresswell get hurt and are you trying to blame me? Did he tell one of his dirty lies? He said he'd get even with me. Try the case, you say!" Suddenly he leaned forward and grasped Ingeborg's wrist. "Judge, is Cresswell dead?"

"Why do you act a part with me, Mr. Evans?" asked Ingeborg sadly. "I admit that you are very clever, and you've had a long time in which to prepare for this. But perhaps it's better so. Come, let's get back to the block of ore."

But Heber continued to glare at her. "I'll not move until you tell me what crime you think I'm guilty of. In your marvelous code of justice, don't you hold it fair to tell the accused the nature of the crime, even if the blood is dripping from his knife? Come; Judge, hold a preliminary hearing, now and here."

"Well," Ingeborg smiled with twisted lips, "I don't know why after, all I've done now, I should draw the line at naming your crime. Nip Brody followed you and Cresswell up to the mine on some matter of business. He found Cresswell sitting dead at the door of the tunnel with a bullet in his chest."

Heber whitened under his tan and grime. But his eyes were grim and piercing. Ingeborg paused to study his face for a moment, then she went on:

"Nip came to Olla and got me. We gave the mine what he called a thorough examination, then we brought the body back to town. We have been scouring the country for you. Last night I grew suspicious of the thoroughness with which the sheriff searched the mine and I decided to come over here and make a hunt for myself. Nobody knows I came."

Heber moistened his lips. There was silence while the man and woman gazed at each other.

"And you think that I killed him?" Heber demanded finally.

"I'm not going to express my belief until the hearing," answered Ingeborg.

"I'm not speaking to the justice of the peace now. I'm asking the woman, Ingeborg Olson, if she thinks Heber Evans has done this murder?"

"I can't divorce the job and the person." Ingeborg spoke with stiffened lips.

Heber dropped his head on his arms. Ingeborg sat watching him, every muscle in her body tense. The sweat ran down her face. Her breath came in quick gasps. At last Heber looked up.

"And I'd counted on you!" he said hoarsely. "Counted that there was a woman in you capable of a loyalty and a love even in friendship to exceed that of any woman in the world!" He looked at her with a flare of contempt in his brown eyes and struggled to his feet. "Come, let us see if we can get out of this rat-hole."

NOT a word was spoken by the two until they emerged into the widening of the passage where Ingeborg had fallen. Then Heber, after resting at full length, crawled up to the great block that shut off the passage. He looked at it for a few minutes, then came slowly down to rest again.

"No use tearing our hands on that," he said. "But we can call at intervals. I don't know now," with an unpleasant grin, "that I am so eager to get out."

Ingeborg clambered stiffly up to the block, placed her lips close to the tiny crevice at the right and shouted until her voice failed her utterly. Then she slid down to the base of the débris where Heber half sat, half reclined.

This recess was of sufficient height to allow them to stand, but it was not over four feet square, with the débris from the fall covering the floor. They were obliged to sit very close together, and this, with the tumult raging within her, Ingeborg found intolerable. She was relieved when Heber crawled up to the crevice and called for help until he could not speak above a whisper. When he came back to rest beside her, she rose and stood against the wall. Heber watched her deliberately. She loomed very tall in the candle-light, her fine, stalwart body clean-cut and graceful in the riding-breeches and blouse.

Suddenly she burst forth in a husky, uneven voice: "How can you be so unfair as to blame me for doing my duty? Would you expect of a man what you expect of me?"

"No," replied Heber coolly. "But a woman can't be anything but a woman, and she should not choose a profession that expects her to be otherwise."

"Bah! I'm sick of such sophistries!" Ingeborg's hoarse voice was furious. "I expected better things of you."

"So? Tell me, Judge, just what would you expect of a man capable of doing murder?"

"What makes you so sure I consider you capable of having murdered?" Ingeborg folded her arms on her breast and looked at Heber defiantly.

He rose suddenly and stood before her, eye gazing steadily into eye. "Look here, Ingeborg, let there be no evasions between you and me. I know you now. I know that your profession is a fetish that permits no other worship. Your god is a jealous god. And I realize that, instead of risking your life for me as my friend, as I thought when your face came to me out of the darkness, you risked your life as a hound of the law, to drag me to justice—your justice. And listen! See if that cold brain of yours can fathom this! I don't care whether I'm found guilty or not! I have loved you so much that the fact that you can do this in the name of justice deprives me of my interest in life."

The blood surged to Ingeborg's face. "What do you know of my brain? Cold? I tell you that it is a seething caldron and it has been ever since Lincoln Cresswell was found murdered. To know that I love you, as a woman of my kind can love, and to know that I never can respect myself again if I do not forget that love and deliver you into the hands of the law— Heber, I am half mad! Half mad!"

Heber drew a long, shuddering breath. "You love me!" he said wonderingly. And then in the utter silence the two looked deep into each others eyes.

"Ingeborg," said Heber finally, "I didn't kill Cresswell."

"Do you know who did it?"

"No."

"Didn't you and he quarrel bitterly the morning you came up here?"

"Yes!"

"Weren't you quarreling up to the moment you parted?"

"Yes."

"Aren't you carrying a gun now, in your hip pocket?"

"Yes, it was Cresswell's. I took it away from him because I was afraid he'd use it on me."

"Let me look at it."

Heber handed over the Colt. Ingeborg examined it. One chamber had been discharged. She gave it back without comment.

"You hated Cresswell?"

"Yes! He said vile things about you."

"Is that what you quarreled about?"

"Yes."

Again there was silence. Then Heber said slowly: "One curse of a legal training is that it develops one's natural distrust of human beings to the *n*th degree. You'd suspect your own mother of crime."

"My own father stole!" Ingeborg's voice was unbelievably bitter.

"And so your lover must have committed murder!" Heber's parched lips twisted sardonically. His eyes watched the guttering candle. Ingeborg did not stir until the spluttering wick slipped through the ring to the floor. Then with shaking hands she adjusted a fresh candle to the holder. It was then that Heber saw that tears were running down her burning cheeks. But he neither spoke nor moved, and, as if to hide her emotion, Ingeborg crept once more to the crevice and shouted for help.

When she came down, Heber said: "There's no use in my calling with this remnant of a voice. It won't carry ten feet."

Ingeborg nodded and offered him one of the two remaining sandwiches. "We may as well eat them," she whispered. "Whether the gray mare stays where she is or breaks away and goes home, they'll look for me here sooner of later."

Heber did not answer. He ate his sandwich and lay back on the débris, his eyes on the candle. Ingeborg sat at his feet. Not a minute passed before Heber was asleep. The judge watched him for a long time. He was very restless, muttering incoherently. Finally Ingeborg moved softly to his head, braced her back against the wall and lifted his head to her knee.

"Look out, Cress," he said sharply. "I'll shoot you sure as God if you say that again." Then he settled his head comfortably on Ingeborg's knee and dropped fathoms deep into slumber.

SHE sat with the tears running unheeded down her cheeks—how long she did not know. Finally, with her head against the dirty wall, she, too, slept. When she woke, they were in darkness. Heber's head was still on her knee. She attempted to ease her cramped leg and immediately he stirred and she could feel his inquiring hand touch her arm and cheek.

"Ingeborg?"

"Yes, Heber!"

"I must have slept a long time. Wait till I light up."

She rose to help him and as the light flared up he looked at her with the old, wistful smile.

"That was good of you, Ingeborg. I feel like a new man. What time is it?"

"Just noon," she replied.

"Ingeborg," asked Heber, "how do you suppose it is going to affect the court to have been shut up in this place for a day or so with the accused?"

"How can you make sport of it?" cried Ingeborg passionately.

"You forget," returned Heber, "that I know I'm not guilty, though I'll admit that things look pretty nasty for me. And also, your Honor, I can't forget that the court's made love to me."

"You are very much mistaken if you think I made love to you," said Ingeborg grimly. "I told you that I loved you. There is a great difference! If I once made love to you, I'd never be able to conduct your trial. And Heber, I am going to do my duty as I swore to do when I took my oath of office."

"My God, Ingeborg! Do you think I'm trying to persuade you from doing your duty or that I'm resentful toward you for doing it? What has put the iron in my soul is that you believe me guilty. And that's wrong both for the woman who loves me and the judge who has not yet heard my case."

"I'm human, I suppose," said Ingeborg shortly. "I can't keep my mind a complete blank."

"This ideal justice which you worship knows no preconceived opinion," said Heber. "Oh, Ingeborg, life is not like that! Life is not a clean-cut guilty or not guilty, and the just judge knows it. Life is made up of acts directed by impulses impalpable to those who have no spiritual antennæ. And the just judge will pronounce no man guilty until he has touched the mind and soul of the accused at the very quick. Ingeborg, you are mistaking a withdrawal from all human sympathies for cold justice. There is no such thing as cold justice, because no man is capable either of feeling or administering it."

He reached out to take her hand, but she moved away from him. "No!" she whispered. "No!" Then she added: "Listen!"

Voices sounded faintly from beyond the block. Ingeborg sprang to the crevice. "Here!" she shouted. "Here!"

Shortly Nip Brody's voice came to them. "Halloo!"

"Hello, Sheriff," called Ingeborg. "Mr. Evans and I are both down here."

"Anybody hurt?" asked Nip.

"No, Nip!" cried Heber. "Be careful how you handle that block. If it comes down on us it will ruin us. Anybody there to help?"

"Yes, Haskins. Hurry up, John!"

A moment later the postmaster was calling greetings down through the shelter. Then Nip said, "If we shovel away this broken rock we can shove the big block away, John."

Half an hour later Ingeborg and Heber passed through the central chamber, following Nip and John. Very shortly they were blinking in the blessed light of the sun. Then the sheriff turned to put his hand gently on Heber's shoulder.

"Old man, I've got to arrest you and take you to the cooler and I'd rather be shot. For heaven's sake, after such a clean job of shooting, why didn't you make a clean get away?"

INGEBORG was sick at heart and afraid; afraid of the strange new Ingeborg that she had not known existed; afraid of that woman within her who recognized neither law nor the accepted order of life; the woman on whose knees Heber's head had rested; the woman who, had actual danger menaced that unconscious form, would have killed joyfully to protect it; the viking woman, fierce, primeval, tender, who went singing down to the sea in ships and knew the wonders of the deeps of love; the viking woman whose blood had coursed in Ingeborg's veins for a thousand years and of whose existence she never had dreamed until now.

She rode slowly homeward, drooping in her saddle, her eyes on the brooding desert from whose far levels the heat rolled in ceaseless waves. The gray mare, which had been watered at the Bright Hope, but which was very hungry, roused her by breaking into a canter as they reached the mesa top.

Ingeborg stumbled into the living-tent. Her mother ran to her side. "Ingeborg! Ingeborg! I ben most crazy about you!"

Ole came slowly up and took her canteen, but Ingeborg forgot to be surprised. She sank into a chair. "Let me have a cup of coffee, mother, before I say a word."

They waited patiently while she gulped down the steaming beverage. Then she told her story, omitting carefully all details of conversation between herself and Heber. As her hoarse voice ceased, her father said:

"If you hold him for trial, you ain't a woman, Ingeborg, that's all."

The judge turned to her father as he stood by the rude table, the lamp giving a softened color to his haggard face.

"I suppose," she said, "that if I'd been a son you'd have thought I had done a man's work to-day!"

"You ain't asking me to give you compliments after all these years?" His lips twisted. Ingeborg turned and followed her mother out of the tent.

THE hearing was set for two o'clock in the afternoon, three days later. During those three days Olla was in a state of delighted anticipation unparalleled in its history. Word had traveled through all the hills that Heber Evans was in a shooting scrape, that murder had been done and that the lady judge was to hold a sure-enough murder trial. The day before the hearing folk began to drift into Olla until the hotel overflowed on to its piazza. That night there was scarcely a porch in town that did not shelter a sleeping form or two.

On the day of the trial Ingeborg did not come into town until just in time to open court at two o'clock. Immediately after breakfast she had started off for a tramp into the peaks behind the Rainy Day. In spite of the terrible heat, she had climbed for two hours, moving as if she were scourged by her thoughts. At noon she had returned, bathed and eaten her lunch. Her father and mother, after a look at her pale face, had exchanged glances and the meal was taken in silence. But as she had started for the door, Ole had said in an ugly warning voice:

"If you don't free him, don't come back here."

Ingeborg had not answered by so much as a look.

When the judge opened the rear door and came in, the courtroom was crowded. The silence was breathless. She had not donned her skirt. In her well-worn corduroy riding-suit, her face calm and inscrutable above the immaculate white cravat, she seemed sexless. She was, to that breathless audience, the Law; the Law which they themselves had made and which they were incapable of enforcing.

She seated herself in the crude armchair beside the table and waited. The wind blew a hot blast of sand across the table. Then the door opened and the sheriff and Heber came in. Heber was well groomed and the only cool-looking person in the room. He had steadfastly refused to have a lawyer.

Ingeborg went through the preliminary business rapidly. Then she began to call witnesses. Sheriff Brody told of the finding of the body. Old Gilbert, with considerable unction, described the nature of the wound. Several witnesses told of various quarrels they had heard between Heber and Lincoln at various times and in various places. Finally Ingeborg called John Wayne, the mine foreman. He was a short man with a thatch of grizzled hair and a sparse mustache. The judge looked at him with tightening lips.

"Did you have any conversation with the prisoner on the night before the murder?"

"Yes, Judge! Mr. Cresswell, he called me into the office after supper and told me to get the car in shape, as they were going up to the Bright Hope early. Heber, he spoke up and said, 'Lincoln, how many times have I told you that the men aren't chauffeurs and that Jack don't run a public garage? We keep the car in order ourselves.' I could see they was both mad and I said, 'Shucks, Heber, I'd do more than manicure the flivver for you any time,' and then I went out."

"Did you see either Mr. Cresswell or Mr. Evans again that night or in the morning?"

"No, Judge, but I sure heard 'em in the morning!"

"What did you hear?" Ingeborg's clear gaze did not leave John's face.

Jack shifted his weight from one foot to the other and looked at Heber uneasily. Heber leaned forward.

"Your Honor, if I may be so informal as to interrupt, I'd like to suggest that you waive hearing the details of that quarrel. I admit right now that we came to blows."

A murmur went over the courtroom.

"I can not grant that," said Ingeborg quietly.

"Then clear the courtroom and hear the testimony privately!" exclaimed Heber.

A faint color stained the judge's white face. For just a moment she hesitated, then she said: "No! From every standpoint it is best that this hearing proceed with complete publicity. Go on with your story, Mr. Wayne."

Jack cleared his throat. "Well, my tent is next to where they keep the car, and when they came out to get her of course they woke me up. I had worked on the car the night before and thought I had her in running shape. But they took turns cranking her and she wouldn't budge."

A chuckle went over the courtroom. Ingeborg looked over the crowd with her white, steady face and the room was suddenly stilled.

"Then Cresswell said, 'If that boob had cleaned the spark-plugs, we'd be off by now,' and Heber answered pleasant enough, 'Never mind, I'll clean them now. Only, I tell you, Linc, when you consider that you, with your woman-chasing, run the car ten miles to my one, seems like once in a while you ought to clean her up yourself.' That's right,' says Cresswell. 'Of course you are immaculate! And of course that Snow Woman is as cold as she looks! You and she can fool the rest of Olla, but you can't fool your Uncle Dudley. I know these Norwegian peasants and their ways which are the ways of cattle.' And then I heard a sound like a shovelful of tailings dropping on the wet sump. 'Mention that name again, will you, you cur?' says Heber. 'Next time I won't knock you down. I'll shoot you!' Then there was nothing said for quite a while. They cranked the car some more, but they couldn't get her started, and finally Heber said he was going to walk it, and that was the last I heard of them."

Heber sat with his eyes on the window through which he saw the brown top of the pass cut vividly across the burning blue of the sky. But no one more than glanced at Heber. All eyes were fixed on Ingeborg's face. After a long pause, she said:

"This completes the evidence so far collected on the part of the prosecution. Before we hear the defense, I shall adjourn the court for half an hour."

She rose and went hastily out of the door, along the deserted street to her office, which she locked after her. Then she strode like a wild woman up and down the room.

"I can't do it!" she groaned. "I can't do it! I'm not a lawyer in this. I'm a woman. And, O God, if I don't do it, I deserve to be disbarred!" She twisted her hands together, her face distorted with anguish. But when she reentered the courtroom promptly at the end of the half-hour her face, though it was tense, told no tale of the tumult within. She walked slowly to the table and stood beside it, her fine head thrown back.

"I am going to insist," she said in a low voice, "that the prisoner take change of venue. It is impossible for me to make a fair decision in the case." A gasp went round the courtroom. "I realize," Ingeborg went on, "that I am laying myself open to criticism. I realize—" Suddenly her iron grip on herself broke and she threw up her arms. "I can not send this man before a jury! I can not!"

SOMEBODY started to applaud. Heber jumped to his feet, protest in his face. But before he could speak, Molly Fish rushed out into the aisle.

"What does she mean, Nip, by change of what-you-may-call-'em?"

"She means she's going to send him over to Palomas to be tried and his one chance to escape a jury is gone!"

"No, it isn't!" cried Molly. "I shot Lincoln Cresswell myself!" and she crumpled in a heap at Brody's feet.

There was a mighty scraping of chairs and every voice in the room save Heber's and Molly's contributed to the uproar. Finally the judge seized her riding-whip and pounded on the table with the butt end. The crowd paused long enough to hear her say: "Court is adjourned! Sheriff, clear the room!" And shortly she and Heber, with the sheriff, were alone with Molly. Ingeborg sat down on the floor and took Molly's head in her lap.

"Bring water, Sheriff," she said. "Then you men clear out."

Alone in the ugly, bare room, Ingeborg bathed Molly's little white face and waited.

When the girl opened her tired eyes, the judge asked, "Feeling better, Molly?"

Molly struggled to a sitting position and looked about her, first at Ingeborg, then at the window, where the blue sky glowed.

"I thought sure you'd set him free," she panted. "I never knew about that last quarrel. I thought there'd be no evidence. But he could have been hung on that stuff you were getting together!"

"I couldn't have set him free," said the judge gently. "I thought he was guilty."

Molly began to sob miserably. "I did it. I knew they were going up there. He hadn't been near me for weeks and he wouldn't talk to me over the telephone or answer my notes. And I went up to the mine and hid. It was just getting dawn when I shot him and I got back to town without a soul seeing me. I never thought they'd blame Heber!"

"But Molly, why did you do it?" urged Ingeborg.

"Can't you guess?" sobbed Molly. "His baby will be born in the fall. And now he's dead, I don't want to live either."

Ingeborg, with a new softening of her face, slipped her arm around Molly's shoulders. "Poor little girl!" she murmured.

There was a soft rap on the door and Nip Brody came in. "I put a cot up in your office, Judge," he announced. "Molly'll be up there to-night." Then in response to the astonishment in Ingeborg's face, he went on: "If you think sentiment in this town will let me keep Molly Fish in that stinking cooler, you're mistaken. Come on, Molly."

Ingeborg picked up her riding-whip and stood with drooping head until the crowd that had waited outside had followed poor little Molly up the street. Then, quite unheeded, she made her way to the corral and saddled her horse.

SHE saw no one on her way home. She rode slowly, a solitary figure in the burning grandeur of the pass. The summer heat surged over her in furnace blasts. The golden floor of the desert, the blue bowl of the heavens, unrolled in infinite beauty before her. Ingeborg, her eyes wearied with thinking, gazed on the passionate loveliness that had changed the very vitals of her existence.

When she reached the corral, her father was standing at the bars. "So Evans is free!" he exclaimed, the first pleasant smile on his face that Ingeborg had seen there for many a day.

Ingeborg nodded and pulled the saddle off the gray mare. "Who told you?"

"He did. I heard that old flivver and I yumped out here, and here he was!"

Ingeborg gave a glance at the office. "I'm dead tired," she said, starting hastily up the trail toward the tents. "I'm going to sleep until supper-time."

But she did not sleep. She lay on her cot motionless, her eyes on the parching gray canvas, her lips compressed, her hands clenched. At supper-time she went over to the living-tent. Her father was not there. In answer to Ingeborg's inquiry, Olga said:

"He ben over at the office. He kept books and tally while Mr. Evans ben away. When Mr. Evans came back, he told him, if he ben strong enough, to keep on!"

"That's foolish!" exclaimed Ingeborg. "That's—" Then she bit her lips and said nothing more.

Dusk was falling when she left the tent. Heber was coming rapidly up the trail.

"Ingeborg, come for a little walk with me," he said.

"I'm not in a nice frame of mind for a walk!" Ingeborg spoke slowly.

"I'll take you as you are!" Heber laughed. "Come, Ingeborg! You and I have so much to settle." And he led the way up the trail to the Frangi Panni. Here they established themselves on the steps of the little house where they could see the mesa, the pass and the desert beyond catching the last of the afterglow.

Heber put his hand on Ingeborg's knee, but she pushed it abruptly away.

"Don't! Don't! I'm all wrong within. My whole house has tumbled!"

"Tell me about it, Ingeborg," said Heber quietly.

"I broke my oath of office! I undertook to hear your case when I was prejudiced against you. I believed you guilty."

"But you remedied that," protested the man, "when you ordered change of venue."

"But I ordered that not because I believed you guilty, but because, believing you guilty, when I entered that courtroom for the first time this afternoon I was determined to free you! I didn't know how I was going to do it. I was going to hear all evidence freely and then by fair means or foul I was going to quash the case. Then I fought one more fight with myself and came back and ordered change of venue to save my honor as a judge."

"In other words," Heber's voice was grim in the dusk, "you would have sacrificed the man you love to save your legal conscience! Ingeborg! Ingeborg! I can forgive you believing me guilty. I can't forgive, perhaps because I can't understand, your worship of what you call cold justice."

Ingeborg, her burning forehead resting on her hand, groaned. Heber went on slowly:

"I've puzzled and puzzled over it. Is it that cold North-woman blood in you? Or is it the intense self-consciousness of your sex placed in a position that is against your sex nature? Do you know in that cold brain of yours that a woman with her tenderness can never be a dispenser of cold justice? And knowing this and fearing it, does that make you lean too far the other way?"

"I know nothing of the sort!" answered Ingeborg. "What I do know is that your lax desert standards have already undermined my mental integrity. I shall resign and return to the practise of law!"

"My idea would be," Heber's voice had an edge that cut, "that my case has shown you supremely well fitted for the bench!"

The judge did not answer at once. The silence held until the heavens were thick studded with stars. Then Ingeborg said:

"Heber, I'm not fit to be a judge. I find that I can't be instrumental in visiting even a mild punishment on little Molly Fish! A year ago I'd have had no bowels of compassion for her. I'd have said that any girl of her type and environment knew exactly what that sort of a relationship with a man meant. And yet, now—oh, Heber, my fine, high house of life that I have erected, with, you can not dream, what sacrifice, has fallen about my ears! I am adrift without a rudder, and to a person of my temperament that is the very peak of agony!"

Heber turned toward her in the starlight. "Why did it fall, Ingeborg?"

"You warned me," she answered, "that the desert had strange influences. And the desert has taken my heart and restrung it to its own pitch! Its warmth and beauty have drugged me!"

"No, not drugged you!" cried Heber eagerly. "Not drugged you! Nowhere in the world is life more real than here in the desert! Our passions are nearer the surface, that is all. The naked austerity and harshness and beauty of the desert develop all our latent loves and hates and fears to the point where they erupt at a prick. That is all."

"All for you, perhaps," said Ingeborg sadly. "But not all for me! I must rebuild my house. I can not live as you desert people do, naked to the universe! I can not live a life of the senses. In the mind is my or any one else's most satisfying life."

"I agree with you!" returned Heber. "But do you think that your mind must stultify because you let the warmth of the desert enter your soul? If you are that stupid, Ingeborg, you had better go back to your north."

"It is too late!" said the judge. "It is mine no longer."

"Why is it too late?" asked Heber.

Ingeborg sprang to her feet. "Because after the desert opened the door love swept in. God! I am half mad with it! This is no silly, guilty lust such as poor Molly and Cresswell exchanged. I am no puerile miss. I'm a woman with the brain and the body that sailed the seas with Magnus and Sigurd and Erling Skakke. I've found life ugly and raw and I've conquered it. And now life has risen from under my feet where I had forced it. Not life as I have known it before. The very essence of existence, the very primal impulses of the Creator, have seized me and I am maddened by their beauty and their sadness and their ferocity."

She paused and the two stood in silence, the man with his head bowed, the woman with her face to the stars.

"I will not be conquered so!" said Ingeborg at last. And she turned and strode down the trail.

Ingeborg the next morning was met at the foot of the staircase leading to her office by the sheriff.

"I don't want to disturb Molly," she explained; "but I must get some papers before I go over to the court-house."

"You won't disturb Molly," said Nip. "Molly has beat it!"

"What do you mean?" asked the judge sharply.

"What I say! When I rapped on the door an hour ago, there was no answer. I busted in the door. No Molly! After all my bother to get a cot for her, too."

Ingeborg, with a rueful smile, shook her head and went on up to her disordered office.

By noon Olla had dropped into somewhat of its wonted quiet. The judge turned off an accumulation of petty court work that kept her at the court-house until late in the afternoon. There was an unusual cordiality in Olla as she rode up the street homeward bound. But she observed it through a haze of her own intense preoccupation.

When she sat down to supper, her father said: "Mr. Evans told me to say he would like to call on you this evening. I ben his clerk now and timekeeper."

Ingeborg looked at her father closely. It seemed to her that his face was beginning to fill out.

"Mr. Evans is very generous to you," she said.

Ole's expression was half disdainful, half triumphant. "He is a man! He knows yust what it is to be crazy homesick and half dead. He never hated his father. He ain't ben that kind."

"I hate you, father," said Ingeborg, looking at him with a new expression in her clear blue yes, "just about as much as you hate me and in the same way."

Ole returned her look with eyes very similar to her own. "I know yust what's the matter with both of us," he said with a sudden smile. "We both ben crazy about Heber Evans!"

Then the judge went out into the kindly desert night.

HEBER was waiting for her. They did not speak until once more they were on the steps of the little house at the Frangi Panni. Then, as he sank down beside Ingeborg, Heber said sternly: "Now, let's have it out."

"First," said Ingeborg, "I want to thank you for what you've done for my father. It is very generous."

"It's not generosity. It's desert justice, if you will! There are so few of us out here that we understand each other's sufferings and punish accordingly. Ingeborg, what are you going to do?"

"I shall go back to practising law. About you— Oh, Heber, I don't know! I don't know!"

"Then let's stay right here till you do know!" said the man. "A woman like you can't tell a man that she loves him and expect him ever to be quite the same again. I think that I have a right to demand that here, to-night, you tell me whether or not you will marry me."

"But don't you see," cried Ingeborg, "that if I marry, my usefulness in my profession——"

"I care nothing about that!" interrupted Heber. "That is in your hands. The one great fact in the Universe to-night is your wonderful love—and mine. Good Heavens, Ingeborg! What do you think I am, a man of stone, that after what you said to me last night, that after thirty years of my life have passed without a woman in them and I meet and love a woman like you, with a love, by the Eternal, as great as your own—that after all this, I can sit under the burning stars and discuss cold justice with you?"

Ingeborg continued her pacing without reply. The warm air lifted the hair from her forehead. The cry of a distant coyote pack drifted from a far cañon. It seemed as if Ingeborg must be wearied out when she suddenly paused in front of Heber as he sat upon the step. Then slowly she dropped to one knee before him and bowed her head upon his hand as it lay upturned upon his knee. It was a gesture of infinite beauty, as if Ingeborg's pride did homage to the wonder of the gift which had descended upon them.

"Ah, Ingeborg!" whispered Heber brokenly, and he lifted her face and laid his lips to hers.

**Coming next month—October, out September 15th—a short story, by Mrs. Willsie, called "The Pinto Stallion." It's the story of a hunt for a wild horse—a hunt as thrilling as any man hunt of fact or fiction.**

# The Urge

## *Have You Ever Pondered Over Fame, Success? What Is It? Can It Best be Achieved by Causing Laughter or Tears?*

## By Maryland Allen

Illustrations by C. Clyde Squires

SHE is now a woman ageless because she is famous. She is surrounded by a swarm of lovers and possesses a great many beautiful things. She has more than one Ming jar in the library at her country place; yards upon yards of point de Venise in her top bureau-drawer. She is able to employ a very pleasant, wholesome woman, whose sole duty it is to keep her clothes in order.

She wears superb clothes—the last word in richness and the elegance of perfection—clothes that no man can declaim over, stimulating himself the while with shot after shot of that most insidious of all dope, self-pity. You see, she earns them all herself, along with the Ming jars, the point de Venise, the country place and countless other things. She is the funniest woman in the world—not in her press-agent's imagination, but in cold sober fact. She can make anybody laugh; she does make everybody.

Night after night in the huge public theatres of the common people; in the smaller private ones of the commoner rich; in Greek amphitheatres where the laughter rolls away in thunderous waves to be echoed back by distant blue hills; in institutions for the blind; in convalescent wards; everywhere, every time, she makes them laugh. The day laborer, sodden and desperate from too much class legislation, the ego in his cosmos and the struggle for existence; the statesman, fearful of losing votes, rendered blue and depressed by the unruliness of nations and all the vast multitude of horrors that lie in between—all of these, all of them, she makes laugh. She is queen of the profession she has chosen—unusual for one of her sex. She is the funniest woman in the world.

When she is at home—which is seldom—she has many visitors and strives, if possible, to see none of them.

"You know, I entertain so much," she pleads in that vivid, whimsical way of hers that holds as much of sadness as mirth.

But this time, it being so early in the afternoon, she was caught unawares.

The girls—they were nothing but girls, three of them—found her out upon the lawn, sitting on a seat where the velvety green turf fell away in a steep hillside, and far beneath them they could see the river moving whitely beyond the trees. They halted there before her, happy but trembling, giggling, but grave. They were gasping and incoherent, full of apologies and absurd tremors. It had taken their combined week's savings to bribe the gardener. And they only wanted to know one thing: How had she achieved all this fame and splendor, by what magic process had she become that rarest of all living creatures, the funniest woman in the world?

It was an easy enough question to ask and, to them, hovering twittering upon high heels a trifle worn to one side, a simple one for her to answer. She looked at them in that humorous, kindly way of hers, looked at their silly, excited, made-up faces with noses sticking out stark, like handles, from a too-heavy application of purplish-white powder. Then her glance traveled down the velvety green slope to the bright river glancing and leaping beyond the shady trees.

Did she think of that other girl? Sitting there with that strange smile upon her face, the smile that is neither mirth nor sadness, but a poignant, haunting compound of both, did she remember her and the Urge that had always been upon her, racking her like actual pain, driving her with a whip of scorpions, flaying her on and on with a far more vivid sense of suffering than the actual beatings laid on by her mother's heavy hand, the thing that found articulation in the words, "I must be famous, I must"?

SHE belonged in the rear of a batch of a dozen, and had never been properly named. The wind was blowing from the stockyards on the dark hour when she arrived. It penetrated even to the small airless chamber where she struggled for her first breath—one of a "flat" in the poorest tenement in the worst slum in Chicago. Huddled in smelly rags by a hastily summoned neighbor from the floor above, the newcomer raised her untried voice in a frail, reedy cry. Perhaps she did not like the smell that oozed in around the tightly closed window to combat the foul odors of the airless room. Whatever it was, this protest availed her nothing, for the neighbor hurriedly departed, having been unwilling from the first, and the mother turned away and lay close against the stained, discolored wall, too apathetic, too utterly resigned to the fate life had meted out to her to accord this most unwelcome baby further attention. This first moment of her life might easily serve as the history of her babyhood.

Her father was also indifferent. He brought home his money and gave it to his wife—children were strictly none of his business. Her brothers and sisters, each one busily and fiercely fending for himself, gave no attention to her small affairs.

Tossed by the careless hand of Fate into the dark sea of life to swim or perish, she awoke to consciousness with but one thought—food; one ruling passion—to get enough. And since, in her habitual half-starved state, all food looked superlatively good to her, cake was the first word she learned to speak. It formed her whole vocabulary for a surprisingly long time, and Cake was the only name she was ever known by in her family circle and on the street that to her ran on and on and on as narrow and dirty, as crowded and as cruel as where it passed the great dilapidated old rookery that held the four dark rooms that she called home.

Up to the age of ten her life was sketchy. A passionate scramble for food, beatings, tears, slumber, a swift transition from one childish ailment to another that kept her forever out of reach of the truant officer.

She lay upon the floor in a little dark room, and through the window in the airless air-shaft, high up in one corner, she could see a three-cornered spot of light. At first she wondered what it was, since she lived in a tenement, not under the sky. Then it resolved itself into a ball, white and luminous, that floated remote in that high place and seemed to draw her, and was somehow akin to the queer, gnawing pain that developed about that time beneath her breastbone. It was all inarticulate, queer and confused. She did not think, she did not know how. She only felt that queer gnawing beneath her breastbone, distinct from all her other pains, and which she ascribed to hunger, and saw the lovely, trembling globe of light. At first she felt it only when she was ill and lay on the tumbled floor bed and looked up through the dark window; afterward always in her dreams.

After she passed her tenth birthday the confusion within her seemed to settle as the queer pain increased, and she began to think, to wonder what it could be.

A year or two later her father died, and as she was the only child over whom her mother could exercise any control, the report of her death was successfully impressed upon the truant officer, so that she might be put to work unhindered to help the family in its desperate scramble for food, a scramble in which she took part with vivid earnestness. She was hired to Maverick's to wash dishes.

Maverick was a Greek and kept an open-all-night chop-house, a mean hole in the wall two doors from the corner, where Cake's surpassing thinness made her invaluable at the sink. Also the scraps she carried home in her red, water-puckered hands helped out materially. Then her mother took a boarder and rested in her endeavors, feeling she had performed all things well.

This boarder was a man with a past. And he had left it pretty far behind, else he had never rented a room and meals from the mother of Cake. In this boarder drink and debauchery had completely beaten out of shape what had once been a very noble figure of a man. His body was shrunken and trembling, the old, ragged clothes he wore flapped about him like the vestments of a scarecrow. His cheeks had the bruised congested look of the habitual drinker, his nose seemed a toadstool on his face and his red eyes were almost vanished behind puffy, purple, pillow-like lids. His voice was husky and whispering, except when he raised it. Then it was surprisingly resonant and mellow, with something haunting in it like the echo of an echo of a very moving sweetness.

One night Cake, returning all weary and played-out from dish-washing at Maverick's, heard him speaking in this loud voice of his, pushed the door open a crack and peeked in. He was standing in the middle of the floor evidently speaking what the child called to herself "a piece." Her big mouth crooked derisively in the beginning of what is now her famous smile. The lodger went on speaking, being fairly well stimulated at the time, and presently Cake pushed the door wider and crept in to the dry-goods box, where her mother always kept a candle, and sat down.

The lodger talked on and on while Cake sat rapt, the flickering candle in her hands throwing strange lights and shadows upon her gaunt face. How was she to know she was the last audience of one of the greatest Shakespearian actors the world had ever seen?

It was a grave and wondering Cake that crept to her place to sleep that night between her two older sisters. And while they ramped against her and chewed and snorted in her ears, she listened all over again to that wonderful voice and was awed by the color and beauty of the words that it had spoken. She slept, and saw before her the globe of light, trembling and luminous, the one bright thing of beauty her life had ever known, that seemed to draw her up from darkness slowly and with great suffering. Trembling and weeping she awoke in the dawn, and the strange pain that had tortured her so much and that she had called hunger and sought to assuage with scraps from the plates that came to the sink at Maverick's, became articulate at last. With her hands clasped hard against her breast she found relief in words.

"I gotta be somebody," sobbed the child. "I mus' be famous, I mus'!"

She arose to find life no longer a confused struggle for food, but a battle and a march; a battle to get through one day to march on to the next, and so on and on until, in that long line of days that stretched out ahead of her like chambers waiting to be visited, she reached the one where rested Fame, that trembling, luminous globe of beauty it was so vitally necessary for her to achieve. "How come he c'n talk like that?" she demanded of herself, musing on the lodger's wonderful exhibition over the greasy dish-water at Maverick's.

AND that night she asked him, prefacing her question with the offering of an almost perfect lamb-chop. Only one piece had been cut from it since the purchaser, at that moment apprised by Maverick himself that the arrival of the police was imminent, had taken a hasty departure.

"Who learned you to talk that-a-way?" demanded Cake, licking a faint, far-away flavor of the chop from her long, thin fingers.

The lodger, for a moment, had changed places with the candle. That is to say, he sat upon the dry-goods box, the candle burned upon the floor. And, having been most unfortunate that day, the lodger was tragically sober. He bit into the chop, voraciously, like a dog, with his broken discolored teeth.

"A book 'learned' me," he said, "and practise and experience—and something else." He broke off short. "They called it genius then," he said bitterly.

Cake took a short step forward. That thing beneath her prominent breastbone pained her violently, forced her on to speak.

"You learn me," she said.

The lodger ceased to chew and stared, the chop bone uplifted in his dirty hand. A pupil for him!

"You want to do this perhaps," he began. "Pray do not mock me; I am a very foolish, fond old man——"

The disreputable, swollen-faced lodger with a nose like a poisoned toadstool vanished. Cake saw an old, white-haired man, crazy and pitiful, yet bearing himself grandly. She gasped, the tears flew to her eyes, blinding her. The lodger laughed

One night when she felt herself *Juliet*, soft, passionate and beautiful, she heard the lodger crying: "Stop—my God, stop! How do you get that way?"

disagreeably, he was gnawing on the chop bone again.

"I suppose you think because you've found me here it is likely I'll teach you—you! You starved alley cat!" he snarled.

Cake did not even blink. It is repetition that dulls, and she was utterly familiar with abuse.

"And suppose I did—'learn' you," he sneered, "what would *you* do with it?"

"I would be famous," cried Cake.

Then the lodger did laugh, looking at her with his head hanging down, his swollen face all creased and purple, his hair sticking up rough and unkempt. He laughed, sitting there a degraded, debauched ruin, looking down from the height of his memories upon the gaunt, unlovely child of the slums who was rendered even more unlovely by the very courage that kept her waiting beside the broken door.

"So you think I could learn you to be famous, hey?" Even the words of this gutter filth he sought to construe into something flattering to himself.

Cake nodded. Really she had not thought of it that way at all. There was no thinking connected with her decision. The dumb hours she had spent staring up the air-shaft had resolved themselves with the passing years into a strange, numb will to do. There was the light and she must reach it. Indeed the Thing there behind the narrow walls of her chest gave her no alternative. She did not think she wanted to be an actress. It was a long time after that before she knew even what an actress was. She did not know what the lodger had been. No. Instinctively, groping and inarticulate, she recognized in him the rags and shreds of greatness, knew him to be a one-time dweller in that temple whither, willing or not, she was bound, to reach it or to die.

The lodger looked down at the naked chop bone in his hand. The juicy, broiled meat was comforting to his outraged stomach. Meat. The word stood out in his mind to be instantly followed by that other word that, for him, had spelled ruin, made him a ragged panhandler, reduced him to living among the poorest and most hopeless. Drink! He raised his head and eyed Cake with crafty calculation.

"What will you pay me for such

teaching?" he demanded, and looked down again at the bone.

What he did in the end, Cake herself was satisfied came to him afterward. At first he was actuated only by the desire to procure food and drink—more especially the drink—at the cost of the least possible effort to himself.

Cake saw the look, and she knew. She even smiled a little in the greatness of her relief. She saw she had been right to bring the chop, and appreciated that her progress along the road to fame would be as slow or fast as she could procure food for him in lesser or larger quantities.

"I'll bring you eats," she said cunningly. "From Maverick's," she added. By which she meant the eats would be "has-beens"—distinctly second-class, quite possibly third.

The lodger nodded. "And booze," he put in, watching her face.

"And booze," Cake assented.

So the bargain was struck in a way that worked the most cruel hardship on the girl. Food she could steal and did, blithely enough, since she had no monitor but the lure of brightness and that Thing within her breast that hotly justified the theft and only urged her on. But booze was a very different proposition. It was impossible to steal booze—even a little. To secure booze she was forced to offer money. Now what money Cake earned at Maverick's her mother snatched from her hand before she was well within the door. If she held out even a dime, she got a beating. And Cake's mother, in the later years of her life, besides being a clever evader of the police and the truant officer, developed into a beater of parts. Broken food the child offered in abundance and piteous hope. But the lodger was brutally indifferent.

"Food," he scoffed. "Why, it says in the Bible—you never heard of the Bible, hey?" Cake shook her tangled head.

"No? Well, it's quite a Book," commented the lodger. He had been fortunate that day and was, for him, fairly intoxicated. "And it says right in there—and some consider that Book an authority—man can not live by food alone. Drink—I drink when I have occasion, and sometimes when I have no occasion— Don't you know what drink is, alley-cat? Very well, then, wine is wont to show the mind of man and you won't see mine until you bring me booze. Get out!"

And Cake got out. Also, being well versed in a very horrid wisdom, she took the food with her. This was hardly what the lodger had expected, and I think what respect he was capable of sprouted for her then.

Behind a screen of barrels in the corner of the alley, Cake ate the broken meats herself, taking what comfort she could, and pondering the while the awful problem of securing the booze, since she must be taught and since the lodger moved in her sphere as the only available teacher.

There was a rush up the alley past her hiding-place, a shout and the savage thud of blows. Very cautiously, as became one wise in the ways of life in that place, Cake peered around a barrel. She saw Red Dan, who sold papers in front of Jere Dooley's place, thoroughly punishing another and much larger boy. The bigger boy was crying.

"Anybody c'n sell pi'pers," shouted Red Dan, pounding the information home bloodily. "You hear me?—anybody!"

Cake crept out of her hiding-place on the opposite side. She did not care what happened to the bigger boy, though she respected Red Dan the more. She knew where the money was going to come from to buy the lodger's booze. It meant longer hours for her; it meant care to work only out of school hours; it meant harder knocks than even she had experienced; it meant a fatigue there were no words to describe even among the beautiful, wonderful, colorful ones the lodger taught her. But she sold the papers and she purchased the booze.

Her mother did not know where she spent this extra time. She did not care since the money came in from Maverick's steadily each week. Neither did the lodger care how the booze was procured; the big thing to him was that it came.

At first these lessons were fun for him; the big, gawky, half-starved, overworked child seeing so vividly in pictures all that he told her in words. Full-fed on the scraps from Maverick's—he was no longer fastidious—well stimulated by the drink she brought, he took an ugly sort of degraded pleasure in posturing before her, acting as he alone could act those most wonderful of all plays, watching with hateful, sardonic amusement the light and shadow of emotion upon her dirty face. Oh, he was a magician, no doubt at all of that! Past master in the rare art of a true genius, that of producing illusion.

Then he would make Cake try, rave at her, curse her, strike her, kill himself laughing, drink some more and put her at it again.

Night after night, almost comatose from the fatigue of a day that began while it was still dark, she carried a heaped-up plate and a full bottle to the lodger's room and sat down upon the dry-goods box with the candle beside her on the floor. And, having thus secured her welcome, night after night she walked with him among that greatest of all throngs of soldiers and lovers, kings and cardinals, queens, prostitutes and thieves.

If the liquor was short in the bottle a dime's worth, the lesson was curtailed. At first Cake tried to coax him. "Aw, c'mon, yuh Romeo on th' street in Mantua."

But the lodger was never so drunk that he made the slightest concession.

"Yes, I'm Romeo all right—the lad's there, never fear, gutter-snipe. But—the bottle is not full."

After that she never attempted to change his ruling. She was letter perfect in the bitter lesson, and if the sale of papers did not bring in enough to fill the bottle, she accepted the hard fact with the calm of great determination and did not go near the lodger's room, but went to bed instead.

Perhaps it was these rare occasions of rest that kept her alive.

AFTER the lodger had been teaching her for several years her mother died and was buried in the potters' field. Cake managed to keep two rooms of the wretched flat, and no word of his landlady's demise reached the lodger's drink-dulled ears. Otherwise Cake feared he might depart, taking with him her one big chance to reach the light. You see, she did not know the lodger. Things might have been different if she had. But he was never a human being to her, even after she knew the truth; only a symbol, a means to the great end.

Her brothers went away—to the penitentiary and other places. One by one the flood of life caught her sisters and swept them out, she did not know to what. She never even wondered. She had not been taught to care. She had never been taught anything. The knowledge that she must be famous danced through her dreams like a will-o'-the-wisp; had grown within her in the shape of a great pain that never ceased; only eased a little as she strove mightily toward the goal.

So she still sold papers, a homely, gawky, long-legged girl in ragged clothes much too small for her, and slaved at Maverick's for the lodger's nightly dole that he might teach her and she be famous.

At first he was keen on the meat and drink—more especially the drink. Later, gradually, a change came over him. Only Cake did not notice this change. She was too set on being taught so she could become famous. At first the lodger was all oaths and blows with shouts of fierce, derisive laughter intermingled.

"My God!" he would cry. "If Noyes could only see this—if he only could!"

This Noyes, it appeared, was a man he furiously despised. When he was in the third stage of drunkenness he would never teach Cake, but would only abuse his enemies, and this Noyes invariably came in for a fearful shower of epithets. It was he, as Cake heard it, sitting huddled on the old dry-goods box, the candle casting strange shadows into her gaunt, unchildlike face, who was the cause of the lodger's downfall. But for Noyes—with a blasting array of curses before the name—he would now have what Cake so ardently strove for: Fame. But for Noyes he would be acting in his own theatre, riding in his own limousine, wearing his own diamonds, entertaining his own friends upon his own gold plate.

When he was still too sober to take a really vital interest in the teaching, he was a misanthrope, bitter and brutal, with an astonishing command of the most terrible words. At these times he made the gravest charges against Noyes; charges for which the man should be made accountable, even to such a one as the lodger. One evening Cake sat watching him, waiting for this mood to pass so that the teaching might begin.

"If I was youse," she said at last, "and hated a guy like youse do this Noyes, I'd fetch 'im a insult that'd get under his skin right. I'd make evens wit' 'im, I would, not jes' talk about it."

"Oh, you would!" remarked the lodger.

He took a long pull at the bottle. "You be *Queen Katherine*, you alley-cat."

So the nightly teaching began with the usual accompaniment of curses, blows and shouts of brutal laughter. But when it was over and the lodger was sinking to the third stage that came inevitably with the bottom of the bottle, he kept looking at his pupil queerly.

"Oh, you would! Oh, you would, would you?" He said it over and over again. "Oh, you would, would you?"

And after that he was changed by the leaven of hate her suggestion had started working in him. For one thing, he took a far greater interest in the teaching for its own sake. Of that much the girl herself was thankfully aware. And she thought, Cake did, that the dull husk of self was wearing away from that part of her destined to be famous, wearing away at last. The lodger's curses changed in tone as the nights filed past, the blows diminished, the laughter became far more frequent.

CAKE, as rapidly reaching the end of her girlhood as the lodger was nearing the limits of his drink-sapped strength, redoubled her efforts. It was very plain to her that he could not live much longer; death in delirium tremens was inevitable. After that, she decided, school would not keep, and she must try her fortune.

Then one night in the midst of the potion scene when she felt herself *Juliet*, soft, passionate and beautiful, far away in the land of tragic romance, she heard the lodger crying:

"Stop—my God, stop! How do you get that way? Don't you know there's a limit to human endurance, alley-cat?"

He was fairly toppling from the dry-goods box. His eyes were popping from his head, and in the flickering candlelight his face looked strained and queer. In after life she became very familiar with that expression; she saw it on all types of faces. In fact, she came to expect to see it there. But she did not know how to analyze it then. She glimpsed it only as a tribute to her performance, so immense that she had to be halted in the middle, and felt correspondingly elated. She was exactly right in her deduction. But Cake and the lodger advanced along very different lines of thought.

The next night he was shaky, came all too quickly to the teaching period and left it as speedily. Then he retired to the flock mattress in the corner of the room and called Cake to bring the candle.

"I've an idea I'm going to leave you, gutter-snipe," he said, "and I doubt if I ever see you again. The end of life cancels all bands. And the one that bound you to me, alley-cat, was very material, very material indeed. The kind that runs easily in and out of a black bottle." He laughed.

"You Shakspearian actress!" He laughed again, longer this time. "But I have not forgotten you," he resumed. "In addition to all that I have taught you, I am going to leave you something. Here," he fumbled out a square envelope and Cake took it between her hands. "Take that to the address written on it," said the lodger, "and see what the gentleman does." He began to laugh again.

"Noyes—" he cried and broke off to curse feebly but volubly. Cake did not even glance in his direction. She went away out of the room too utterly stunned with fatigue to look at the letter in her dingy hand.

The next morning the lodger was dead. He was buried in the potters' field quite near his old landlady.

This second funeral, such as it was, closed the shelter that Cake, for want of a more fitting name, had called home. She decided to put all her years of bitterly acquired learning to the test. And as she best knew what she had bought and paid for it, she felt she could not fail. She unfolded from a scrap of newspaper the envelope presented her by the lodger and carefully studied the address.

Cake could both read and write, having acquired these arts from a waiter at Maverick's, who also helped her steal the broken meats with which she secured her artistic education. And, watching the steady disappearance of the food, this waiter marveled that she got no fatter as she grew upward, hovering about in hope of becoming her lover if she ever did. But even if that miracle had ever been accomplished, the helpful waiter would still have waited. Cake's conception of a real lady was *Queen Katherine, Cleopatra* her dream of a dangerous, fascinating one. And what chance in the world for either with a waiter?

Cake read the name and address upon the envelope freely as the hopeful broadcaster had taught her: Arthur Payson Noyes, National Theatre. With the simplicity and dispatch that characterized her, she went to that place. To the man reposing somnolently in the broken old chair beside the door she said she had a letter for Mr. Noyes. The doorkeeper saw it was a large, swanking envelope with very polite writing. He straightened up in the chair long enough to pass her in, and then slumped down again.

CAKE found herself in a queer, barnlike place, half room and half hallway, feebly illumined by a single electric bulb suspended above the door. Very composedly she looked about her. If Mr. Arthur Noyes lived in this place, he was one of her own kind and there was no need for any palpitation on her part. Anyway she was looking solely for her chance to become famous and she brought to this second stage of her search the same indifference to externals, the same calm, unfaltering courage as she had to the first.

"Now then," said a voice briskly. "Say what you want. We have not advertised for any extra people. At least—not this year."

A short, stout man emerged from the shadows. He was very blond, with his hair cut snapper, and his pale eyes popped perpetual astonishment. She returned his look steadily and well. She knew she was born to be famous, and fame has a certain beauty of dignity utterly lacking in mere success.

"I am not an extra person," she replied. "I have come to see Mr. Noyes," and she displayed once more the large, square envelope, her legacy from the lodger, the knife with which she proposed to shuck from its rough shell that oyster, the world.

The man looked even more astonished, if the thing could have been accomplished, and regarded her keenly—stared.

"Come this way," he said.

Cake followed him along a narrow passage that turned off to the right, down five steps, across a narrow entry, up three more steps—although it seems quite silly, she never in her life forgot the odd number of those worn steps—and halted before a closed door. On this the fat man knocked once and opened immediately without waiting.

"Some one I think you'll see," he said, standing between Cake and the interior. There came to her a murmur over his chunky shoulder.

"She has a letter from ——" The fat man dropped his voice and mumbled. "Positive," he said, aloud, after a pause broken only by the vague murmur within the room. "I'd know his fist anywhere. Yes." Then he pushed the door open wide, stood aside and looked at Cake. "Walk in," he said.

She did so. Beautifully. Poems have been written about her walk. Two kinds.

The room she entered was square, with concrete floor and rough walls. But Cake did not notice the room for three reasons: The rug on the floor, four pictures on the walls and the man who looked at her as she entered.

They gazed at each other, Cake and this man, with sudden, intense concentration. He was a genius in his line, she as surely one in hers. And, instinctively, to that strange, bright flame each rendered instant homage. What he saw he described long afterward when a million voices were vociferously raised in a million different descriptions. What she saw she likened in her mind to a dark sheath from which a sword flashed gloriously. That sword was his soul.

"He says your name is Plain Cake—is that true?" He referred to the lodger's letter held open in his hand, and by that she knew he was Arthur Noyes. And great. That last she had not needed any telling.

"Yes," she replied.

"He says you are the right Shakespearian actress for me," Noyes referred to the letter again. "Do you know Shakespeare?"

"All the way," said Cake. It was not quite the answer *Queen Katherine* might have made, perhaps, but her manner was perfect.

"Come here—" he pointed to the center of the rapturous rug—"and do the potion scene for me." Cake stepped forward.

Perhaps you have been so fortunate as to see her. If so you know that to step forward is her only preparation. She was poised, she was gone. Then suddenly she heard the lodger's voice crying:

"Stop—my God, stop! How do you get that way? Don't you know there's a limit to human endurance, alley-cat?"

She broke off, staring confusedly into space just the height of his debauched old figure crouching on the dry-goods box. Then with swift realization of her surroundings, her vision cleared. It was the fat man in the checked suit she saw leaning helplessly against the closed door. His jaw sagged, his eyes were frightfully popped, his face wore the same strained, queer look she had come to see so often on the lodger's, and he made weak little flapping gestures with his hands.

Cake looked then at Arthur Noyes. His face was white as the letter in his hand, his dark eyes were dilated with a look of dreadful suffering, the numb, unconscious reaction of one who has received a mortal blow.

"Come here, Crum," he cried as if there was no one else in the room. And Crum fairly tottered forward.

"What do you make of this?" asked Noyes, while Cake stood and listened.

"I—I—" stammered Crum exhaustedly. "My God," he groaned, "it's too much for me. And training!"

"Oh, trained," Cake heard Noyes say. "Such training as only he could give. Years of it, that's plain. And then to send her to me. A Shakespearian actress for me! To insult me like that——"

"It's too much for me, Boss," said Crum again. "Still— Oh—oh my!" His back was turned, but Cake saw his whole body shake.

"Telephone Meier," exclaimed Noyes suddenly.

"Meier?" Crum became immediately composed, and Cake saw that he was tremendously surprised. "You don't mean that you're going to— After this? Why, she's in the know. Look at her. It's perfect!"

And they both turned and looked at Cake standing unconscious and serene on the other side of the room. You who have seen her know just how perfect the pose was.

"It *is* perfect," Noyes said. "I'd be a pretty poor sport if I did not acknowledge that." Then his voice dropped and Cake only caught snatches here and there. ". . . such genius . . . once in a century . . . get even with him in a way he least expects . . . wipe off the slate entirely . . . no comeback to my play . . . let him see that for himself. Call Meier." Then he turned to Cake.

"Sit down, please," he said courteously. "I have sent for a man who may give you an engagement."

She returned his gaze so quietly that he was puzzled. About her was neither nervous anticipation nor flighty vivacity. The actions of her audience of two left her incurious and calm. You see, she was used to the lodger. Also she had worked to be famous so long that all the flowery borders of self were worn down to the keen edge of doing. Of Plain Cake she thought not at all. But then, she never had. Only of the light at the end of the passage that now loomed so bright to her watching eyes.

IT SEEMED only a minute before Noyes spoke again. "This is Mr. Meier." He regarded her shrewdly all the time.

Cake bowed to Mr. Meier, a fat, gaudy gentleman with thick, hairy hands. And Mr. Meier looked at Noyes and shook his head. She realized they had already been talking together.

"Never before," Mr. Meier said.

"If you will repeat the potion scene," Arthur Noyes suggested. "This time, I trust, you will not be interrupted," he added politely.

And Cake stepped once more into that rich orgy of emotion. This time, though dimly aware of noise and a confusion of shouting, she carried the scene through to the end. "Romeo, I come! This do I drink to thee." She lay for a moment where she had fallen close to the heavenly colors of the rug.

"Goo-hood Gaw-hud!" gasped Mr. Meier, and Cake sat up.

She saw he was rather collapsed upon a chair near which he had been standing up when she began. His fat face was purple, and tears stood in his eyes. But Arthur Noyes had not changed. White, with that look of mortal hurt, he still stood straight and slim against the table.

"You can not offer her less than two hundred a week to begin," he said with the same air of being alone with Mr. Meier.

"No, oh no, no, no, no!" sighed Mr. Meier, wiping his eyes.

He rose and bowed to Cake with the queerest respect, still wiping his eyes with the back of his thick hairy hands. It was a striking commentary upon her years of training that both of these men, successful from long and hard experience, paid her the compliment of thinking her an old hand at the game.

"Mine is the Imperial Theatre, Miss," said Meier. "You should be there to-night by seven o'clock. It ain't necessary we should rehearse. No, oh no, no, no, no! And now, perhaps—" he looked her up and down, oddly— "perhaps I can take you to your—hotel?"

Cake looked him back serene in her belief in what the lodger had taught her.

"I'll be there at seven," she said. "No, thank you." She walked out and across into a small park where she sat until the appointed time.

THEN she went to the stage entrance of the Imperial Theatre, presented the card Mr. Meier had given her and entered. Once inside she was taken to a dressing-room by a fat, comfortable, middle-aged woman who seemed to be waiting for her. After a very short and, to Cake, tranquil period, Mr. Meier bustled in.

"Of course, Miss, you know this is a Revue," he explained, rubbing his hands with a deference that Cake shed utterly, because she did not know it was there.

She nodded, accepting his statement. "We make 'em laugh here," said Mr. Meier. Again Cake nodded; she knew exactly as much about the show as she did before. "You close the second act; it's the best place for you. Leafy, here, will help you dress."

Cake sat still while Leafy dressed her, very hushed and still. The light blazed so near after all these hard, lean years of pursuit, years in which the little affairs of life, like the business of growing from a child to a woman, had simply passed her by. Of that Urge to be famous she was even more burningly aware, herself she did not know at all.

Mr. Meier came and took her by the hand. His fat face was pale and sweating, he seemed almost awestruck by Cake's calm. He drew her out of the dressing-room and through a crowd of people, men and women with painted faces, some beautifully, some extravagantly and strangely dressed. They all stared. One woman shook her head. A man said: "Search me! I never saw *her* before."

Then Mr. Meier thrust her out in the face of a bright light. "Begin," he said hoarsely. "Walk over there and begin."

Quietly Cake obeyed. She had walked right into the bright light that had drawn her so hard and so long. Of course it was time for her to begin. And with this bright light in her face, which soon became to her the candle in that dark room left so far behind, she fared away to the magic land of beautiful make-believe.

And only when *Juliet*, that precocious child, sank down poisoned did she become aware of the uproar about her. The shouts of the lodger, "Stop—my God, stop! How do you get that way?" augmented a million times. It was this she heard.

Slowly Cake lifted herself on her hands, dazedly she peered through the heart of the great light that had caused her such suffering and that she had followed faithfully so bitterly long. On the other side she saw faces, rows and rows of them mounting up to the very roof. Faces laughing; faces convulsed, streaming with tears; faces with eyes fixed and wearing that same queer, strained look she had noticed before; hundreds of faces topping each other in semicircular rows, all different but all alike in that they were all laughing.

She rose to her knees and rested there on all fours—staring.

Laughter! A great clapping of hands rolled about her like thunder, dying down and rising again to even greater volume. Cries of "Go on," assailed her ears, mingled with, "Stop, stop! I can't bear it!"

The curtain fell before her, blotting out the vision of those faces, making the uproar slightly dimmer. Mr. Meier advanced and lifted her to her feet. He moved weakly, exhausted with mirth.

"Even Noyes," he gasped. "He—he can't help it. Oh, my goo-hood Gawhud!"

Cake looked away from him to the men and women that thronged about her. The same faces that had turned to her such a short while ago; but now, how different!

"Oh, don't criticise," one woman cried. "Hand it to her! She can't be beat. She's the one that comes once in a century to show the rest of us what really can be done."

"Meier," shouted a man. "Meier—she'll

Only when *Juliet* sank down poisoned did she become aware of the uproar about her. The shouts of the lodger, "Stop—my God, stop! How do you get that way?" augmented a million times.

have to go back, Meier; she's stopped the show."

Quiet and very still Cake drew away.

IT SEEMED to her only a moment later that Leafy touched her arm.

"Mr. Meier has taken a suite for you here in this hotel," she said. "Can't you eat a little, Miss?"

Eat? She had never had enough to eat in her life. Her life? She had spent her life securing food for the lodger that he might teach her to be famous. Leafy lifted the spoon of hot soup to her lips and immediately she drank—she who had never had enough to eat in her life. Morsel by morsel from the bountifully filled table the kindly dresser fed her. Obediently she ate, and the hot, rich food stimulated her to swifter, more agonizing thought.

Then, for the first time, she saw Arthur Noyes standing with his back against a closed door. She read pity in his eyes, comprehension, great wonder and what she did not know then was the love that came to a rare perfection between them and has never faded. And has no place in this story.

"Will you tell me," he said, "what your name is, where your home is, and who are those that love you there?"

Then he broke off and shrank a little against the door. "Oh, don't," he protested.

Yet she had only looked at him and smiled. But it came to her keenly in her new awareness that his questions covered the whole of a woman's life: Her name, her home and the ones that loved her there. While she—she had no name, she did not even know the lodger's name. She looked down with strange astonishment at her grown-up figure, her woman's hands. She saw herself a ragged, gaunt, bushy-headed child moving on a tight rope above a dark abyss, intent only upon a luminous globe floating just out of reach ahead of her, that she stretched out for eagerly with both her hands. Suddenly the lovely bubble burst and the child was a woman falling and falling among rows of convulsed, shining white faces to the sound of Gargantuan laughter.

"You tell me," Arthur Noyes pleaded gently.

And she did so very simply and beautifully. She did know Shakespeare; it was the only English that she had ever been taught. So Noyes heard how she became an instrument in the hands of the man who hated him mortally, and owed her début and her terrible awakening to what he considered the only sporting answer to that insult. While he listened he pondered, awestruck, upon the fact that out of all this muck and blackness, the degradation of hate by the lodger, the refinement of hate by himself, had flowered that rarest of all human creatures—one that could make the whole world laugh.

"He always hated me," he said. "I told him he had traded his genius for drink, and he never forgave me. Where is he now?"

"Now?" Cake looked up at him in startled wonder. It came over her suddenly that he counted upon the lodger's being in the Imperial Theatre that night.

"Now?" she repeated. "Why, he is dead."

It took Noyes a minute to recover. "What will you do?" he asked her. "Will you go on from this start, continue this—this sort of success?" He felt it the basest cruelty, in the face of her story, to say it was the only kind she was ever destined to make. He waited for her answer, wondering, and a little awestruck. It seemed to him they had come to the supreme test of her genius.

And she looked up at him with such sadness and such mirth—such tragic, humorous appreciation of the darkness in which she had been born, the toilsome way she had traveled to the Great Light and what it actually revealed when she arrived.

"I will go on, from this success," she said. Involuntarily she raised her hand to her breast. "I must, since it is the only way for me. You see," with a humor far more touching than the saddest tears, "I must be famous."

And she smiled that smile that hurt him, the smile the world loves and will give anything to see.

THE most famous funmaker of her time looked away from the bright river fleeting beyond the trees to her giggling, half-terrified visitors.

"Fame," she said, "is a secret that can not be told. It must be discovered by the seeker. Let me offer you tea as a substitute."

# After Twenty Years

*How Little Things Grow into Big Things—a Story Concerning a Hate that was as Implacable as the Cobra—*

## By C. G. Milham

Illustration by Mead Schaeffer

"AND I maintain," said Keelton emphatically, "that even real, genuine hate can be killed."

There were half a dozen of us in Keelton's rooms. The talk had slipped from one topic to another, had gone past the war and its motives, had held fast for a minute or two on a discussion of the way in which *Punch's* "Hate" cartoon had summed up all that was back of the war, and had finally centered on the general subject of hate in all its branches, the particular thesis being that it lived forever.

"It's like the cobra," McInnes had said. "Once aroused, it is implacable. You can never get away from it unless you happen to be the stronger, or the cleverer."

"Yes," agreed Marshall; "but there's something of the rattlesnake about it, too—you always know it's going to strike, because you hear its rattles first."

"You're both wrong—all wrong," Keelton had objected. "You can never tell when it's going to strike, and you can never tell how it's going to end. Certainly, it is all bosh to speak of it as implacable."

"Not if you're considering the real thing," McInnes insisted. "Real, genuine hate more truly resembles the implacability of the cobra than anything else I know of. Why, it's deathless—deathless as love."

It was this that brought Keelton's emphatic assertion that even real, genuine hate could be killed.

"For example," he went on after the half-second's pause that the emphasis of his remark had occasioned, "there's the case of Reynolds and Ryan. You've seen in the newspapers, haven't you, that Ryan is in the hospital with a bullet wound through his shoulder—says he accidentally shot himself?"

There was a chorus of affirmation. The strange shooting of Ryan, the best police captain the city had ever known, in the hallway of the Reynolds home the night before, had been sensationally exploited in all the newspapers that morning.

"And you know that Ryan and Reynolds have been fighting each other for years?" Keelton continued.

"But why not?" McInnes broke in. "Ryan a policeman and Reynolds a gambler—why not?"

"Wait a minute," said Keelton then, "wait a minute. Think! Isn't it a fact that Ryan—what Ryan has done—has made you think of Reynolds as the city's biggest gambler, and isn't it a fact that Reynolds has never done anything worse—I'm not excusing him—but he's never done anything worse than run a poker club?"

McInnes joined us in the chorus of assent.

"Well," said Keelton, "the shot that Ryan has in his shoulder is the climax of twenty years of hate; and in all those twenty years one could never tell when it was going to strike any more than one could imagine it would end as it has."

IT BEGAN twenty years ago, on the day that Jim Reynolds—he was called "Tiny" Reynolds then—caught up with Dan Ryan and Edith Barber on their way home from school. Tiny reached over and took Edith's books.

"You'd think," he said, "that any one with any sense would know enough to carry your books for you."

Dan glared at him scornfully.

"Trying to show off in front of Edith again, aren't you?" he asked.

"I'm trying to show you up for what you are," returned Tiny.

"It'll take a lot more than you to do that," Dan answered him spunkily. Dan was about the average size for his years, but alongside of Tiny, who had earned his nickname because it was so ridiculous for his huge frame, he was small, indeed.

"Nobody asked you to join us, anyway," he went on.

"No?" said Tiny. "That makes me think that 'three's a crowd,' and I guess you'd better walk on."

His tone sounded so strange that Dan looked at him uncertainly for a moment, and then broke into a laugh.

"You've got some nerve, you have," he said. "Anybody would think that she was your girl, instead of mine."

"Your girl?" echoed Tiny. "Your girl? Who ever said she was your girl? She's going to be through with you right now, aren't you, Edith?"

"I—I don't know," she answered him uncertainly, as though she were bewildered by such a question. I don't believe there was anything else in it but that—bewildered uncertainty as to just what to say, because of the strangeness of the question—but Tiny took it for encouragement. You must remember, of course, that they were mere kids. It was at the time of their first term in high school.

"That'll show you where you stand, won't it?" asked Tiny, addressing Dan. "You need to go home to your mother, anyway. Here; I'll show you how to go."

And he reached around in back of Edith, gripped one of Dan's arms, and pulled him over. Then, without any more warning than that, and while Dan struggled for all he was worth, Tiny bent him over into a half-kneeling, half-sprawling attitude on the sidewalk, grabbed for a ruler Edith happened to be carrying, and gave Dan six or seven good, hard spanks. It was an easy thing for Tiny to do, big, strapping lumberman's build that he was even then at fifteen, and Dan was entirely, thoroughly helpless. While he squirmed and struggled, uttering no sound, however, Edith stood looking on as though at a play.

I have never pretended to understand the psychology of girls, and never hope to understand, so I can't hint for you at the reasons that kept her there without a word of protest. Most girls, I am sure, would have tried to interfere, or at least would have said something. The reasons why Edith didn't you will have to figure out for yourself; I am only telling you the facts.

The further facts here are that Tiny presently gave an odd, satisfied little laugh, handed the ruler back to Edith and lifted Dan to his feet. Dan was pretty white, but he didn't have the look of rage that one might have expected. Indeed, except for the whiteness and a sort of forced expression on his face, one would never have known what had happened from looking at him. That is, one could never have known until he spoke. When he did— Have you ever seen lightning strike a tree and strip it of its bark, leaving it, all of a sudden, startlingly naked and bare? That was the kind of effect Dan's voice had. It stripped off all pretense, all veneer, and revealed naked hate in all its hideousness.

"I'll make you pay for this, Jim Reynolds, if it takes me all my life," was all he said.

ALL that fall, Dan and Tiny were seeing each other every day as each tried out for place on the high-school football team; but there was no further mention of the spanking incident. Dan, too, continued to see Edith; but there, too, there was never any reference to the spanking, and Dan seemed to let it affect his attitude toward Edith not in the least. His threat against Reynolds gradually appeared to be forgotten.

Both made the school football team the following year, Dan as quarter-back, Tiny as tackle. Each played a whale of a game and each played with and for the other, whenever necessary, as if that were the sole aim of life. There was one odd incident, though, in their last season, when Dan was knocked out cold in the Poly game and Tiny was first to reach him with a pail of water. He had poured some of it into Dan's face when Dan opened his eyes, saw who it was, and jumped to his feet.

"What do you mean by touching me?" he demanded, and reaching for the pail he swept what was left of its contents into Tiny's face. Turning on his heel, he walked back into the game.

From high school, Reynolds went on to college. While his people were by no means well-to-do and it was rather a struggle for them to do it, they had resolved that he was to have the advantage of a college education and they did their best for him. Reynolds, however, was lazy and a drifter. He did only that which was easiest, he spent much of his time at cards because it always meant money for him, and he became one of the smart crowd in which drinking was considered a manly virtue.

Dan, meanwhile, had started to learn a trade. He stuck to it well and there seemed every reason to believe that he would be able to develop the small contracting business that his father had built up, until Edith knocked it all down like a fallen house of cards by refusing to marry him. With Reynolds away at college, Dan had been seeing a great deal of Edith and had been fancying all sorts of vain things.

"It's Reynolds, I suppose," he said to Edith, when she refused him, a note of bitter resignation in his voice. "Or else perhaps it's because you haven't forgotten that day when he— But I haven't, either."

His tone changed quickly until it seemed to have in it something horribly evil.

"What I said to him that day goes," he went on. "Do you remember what it was?"

But Edith held her hands before her face.

"I don't want to hear you speak that way," she begged. "Dan, I think too much of you—I'm sorry—I wish I could— But, oh, Dan, don't carry that thought—don't say it again."

"I'll say it again in a way that he will remember," answered Dan. "It isn't enough that he did that, but now he's taken you!"

"Don't be foolish, Dan," Edith pleaded with him. "I—why he—he's still at college, and there's been no thought of it."

"But there will be," said Dan, "and he will have you."

It was immediately after this that Dan joined the force. I suppose it was because it seemed to offer a haven of refuge, as it were, a routine where you could be sure of food and clothing and comfort twenty or thirty years ahead, or for life; a routine where ambition could die.

That is, of course, ambition for a man like Dan; for, certainly, he was fitted for finer things.

His change from civilian clothes into a patrolman's blue uniform was virtually coincident with the home-coming from college of Jim Reynolds. There was a story that we never knew fully, involving him in an incident at cards that the college authorities could not overlook, but it was generally given out that he had been compelled to quit in his junior year because his family's finances had taken a disastrous turn. However true that may have been, Jim apparently did not do much to aid in bettering the family affairs. He spent much of his time in paying attention to Edith, and a large share of the remainder was devoted to one of the city's well-known poker clubs. It was said of him that he had phenomenal luck. That he must have had was shortly evidenced when it was whispered he had become a partner in the place.

Edith, I am sure, knew nothing of it. She was one of those women to whom "business" was a sacred word, not to be inquired lightly into or about, and for whom any trade, profession, or commercial activity of any kind was covered by the one generic term. She knew from Jim that he was successful in "business" which kept him most of the time at night; loving him, she believed everything that he told her; and she married him in blind trustfulness. How soon she learned that his income was derived entirely from cards is a question.

IT WENT on like that for two or three years. Ryan had become completely submerged in a police force of several thousand men and was, seemingly, out of the lives of Jim and his wife; Reynolds had become the sole owner of the poker club into which he had played his way in the year before his marriage; there had never been even one occasion that had brought the two men together in any way and it is very certain that Edith and Dan had not seen each other since he had been dismissed by her years before. There seemed every reason to believe that Ryan had forgotten Reynolds and Edith as they had forgotten him. In any event, if either of them remembered, the memory was temporarily obscured just about that time by an arrival of rather extraordinary interest to them: their first-born.

You remember my telling you that you could never tell when Hate was going to strike? Well, it was just at this time, when Ryan had been completely forgotten and when Reynolds and his wife were planning and thinking about all sorts of wonderful things, that it was shown real Hate had been born those years before when Tiny Reynolds spanked Dan Ryan while Edith looked on.

The boy was barely more than two weeks old when Ryan came back into the lives of Reynolds and Edith, came back by way of a raid on Reynolds's club on Bank Street, that sent its owner to a cell until bail could be provided for him; that shortly afterward made him pay a fine of one thousand dollars; and, worse than anything else, hurt him through and through, because of Edith. Where before she had known little of it, or, perhaps, had looked complaisantly on it because of seeing through Jim's eyes, now she had to see it for what it was and to know it for what it was.

To Reynolds, the fine of one thousand dollars did not mean very much; probably the brief spell of jail meant not so much either; but the pain that the cell brought to Edith and the shame and the feeling that it must have killed some of her affection, meant a bitter, biting hurt. And its bite and its bitterness were brought home to him to the full by Ryan, a Ryan who made it plain, through gloating smile, through comment and innuendo and through every possible channel, that the raid and its results were the fruition of a long-cherished plan. Indeed, he was even careful to have it become known to Reynolds that he, Ryan, had worked for two years, ever since he had known of Reynolds in connection with the poker club's activities, to bring about the establishment of a vice squad in the department and had schemed, also, to bring himself to its leadership.

From my view-point, it has always seemed that his hatred for Reynolds was not only more positively reflected in this disclosure of his carefully nurtured plans, but was even Machiavellianly clever in its propaganda. You see, it might have been expected that Reynolds, under the circumstances, would abandon his club; would recognize the unfairness to Edith in continuing. But, with the subtle thrusts that came now from Ryan, a fighting spirit of stubbornness came into his being—your easy-going drifter is, you know, the most stubborn person in the world when he is finally aroused—and he declared unequivocally that he would "not be driven out of business by a thousand Ryans."

THE story of the years that followed is the story of a relentlessly pursuing Nemesis. There were times when Ryan's hands were tied through the election of a liberal administration or through other political pull; but he was able to reach out after Reynolds with unfailing regularity. And always, his raids appeared to come at a time when they could hurt most. If a run of bad luck developed for Reynolds's club, a period of poor patronage or something like that, it was almost sure to have its climax in another raid by Ryan, another fine, perhaps imprisonment.

As for Reynolds—it was only a few weeks ago that he sat alone in the rooms of his latest club, the Tapanon, with elbows on table and chin propped on hands. In front of him lay a litter of paper, scribbled full of figures, fruits of a vain attempt to find some way in which receipts could be balanced to meet expenses. The Tapanon had just been enjoying a brief heyday of prosperity, but was buried now beneath a new wave of reform, and its closing at this particular period was more than ordinarily hard for Reynolds. Up to now the home on Mulberry Street had been a thing apart from the club on Summer Street. But the last run of the Tapanon had been too brief to store up any great reserve, and if Edith and the children were to continue to have what they were accustomed to, the Tapanon would have to go on.

So Reynolds's figures, and so Reynolds's scowl as he brought one hand down with a bang on the table. Since even Folly laughed at the thought of continuance of the Tapanon on Summer Street, it must, it would have to, go to Mulberry Street.

"That's one place he'll never come to," Reynolds assured his chief lieutenant later, voicing thus his verdict that there was but one man for the Tapanon to fear. "They'll never send him to the second precinct, either—it's too quiet. Anyway, it's the only thing to do."

So the house on Mulberry Street was divided into home and Tapanon—the Tapanon, secure in this new form of protection, laughed at reform, and in the laughing seemed in a fair way to grow rich and prosperous. Back of the heavy shades on the two lower floors the lights burned away nightly as usual; the existence of the "best captain of police the city had ever known" was forgotten completely.

There was, as you know, no reason in the world why Ryan should have been transferred to the second precinct within a few weeks after Reynolds had shifted his activities there; and yet, there he was; and there for the first time in years, he met Edith. Passing from the rear of a trolley-car on the second day after his transfer, he came face to face with her.

RYAN would have gone on, but Edith stopped him. "How do you do, Dan?" she hailed him timidly. "How are you? I—I haven't seen you for so long. I——"

It is quite possible that she intended to make a plea for Reynolds, that she intended to recall to his mind the old days, and that she intended to have the recollections plead for her. Whatever she intended was cut short, however, by Ryan's blank stare. His cheeks had at first gone red and then had changed to a bluish whiteness. His glance had at first met hers waveringly and then eagerly, and had then suddenly fallen away. In the light of what followed a few days later, the reason for it was perfectly clear—it was the home-thrust, now actually presented for the first time, of the woe that his bitterness had caused this woman who was for him the one woman, the pain of realizing how he had struck at her in reaching after Jim. Ryan's profession had made him a close observer, a reader of character through observation, and I am tolerably certain that he must have read in Edith's face the story of a great love and must have felt its poignancy. He looked at her again, after a space, stood for a moment, then turned on his heel and walked away.

When Edith told Reynolds about the meeting and how Ryan had walked away without speaking, there was but one explanation of it for him. He marked it down for another count in that long score which memory held. It may have been somewhat of a "last straw" proposition, for a call from Jackson, plain-clothes-man emissary from the second precinct station, a day or so later, with word that "Captain Ryan wished to see Mr. Reynolds," appeared to have been expected and even counted on.

"Wants to see me?" echoed Reynolds to the message, his voice pitched shrill and mean. "Wants to see me? Ryan wants to see me?" he repeated. "See here, Jackson"—Jackson was an old friend of the Tapanon—"see here, Jackson, I want to see *him!*" And Reynolds picked up his hat and got to the second precinct station as fast as his steps could take him.

There he nodded bruskly to Sergeant Purcell, at the desk, and brushed his way into the captain's private office. Ryan sat there alone at his desk, so busily engaged in writing that he failed to note the entrance. Reynolds stood silently in a sort of forced calmness until presently Ryan glanced up and then sprang to his feet.

"You wanted to see me," Reynolds began, quietly enough. "I've come down to tell you that I wanted to see *you.*"

Ryan found his voice.

"Sit down, Reynolds; sit down," he urged.

For a half-minute Reynolds stared uncertainly. The meeting was quite different from what he had expected. But the forced coolness with which he had held himself in hand could not last.

"Sit down with you?" he suddenly exploded. "I'd sooner sit with the devil. What's the use of your trying any of your hypocritical dodges on me? You've been hounding me for twenty years. You've tricked and schemed and plotted in all that time to get me by fair means or foul—and now you have the nerve to invite me to sit down with you!"

Ryan lifted a conciliatory hand.

"Let me tell you, Ryan," Reynolds went on after that second's pause, his voice much quieter, but a quietness that felt like some stealthy, deadly menace. "I've reached the end of my rope with you. I know what you've been doing all these years, and you know, too— know that your record's been all bunk, know that it's me alone you've been after. You've got me, too—Lord, how you've got me! But now, this place—this place you've finally driven me to——"

Once again Ryan sought to interrupt.

"I met your wife the other day, Reynolds," he tried to say, his voice strangely different from the other's. It was utterly lost as Reynolds surged on.

"—this place, Ryan," he continued, "is my home. My wife and children are there. Your fight's not with them; it's with me. Understand? I've come down here to warn you to stay away from them. I—I can't quit this time, and you're not going to make me quit. So I've come to tell you to stay away. Stay away! Do you hear? If you interfere this time, I'm going to kill you, just as sure as you've done all you're going to do to me."

His voice, pitched high and sharp, rang keenly out in the assembly-room and Sergeant Purcell half-rose from his seat, then jumped quickly to the captain's door. It was flung open as he reached it. Reynolds would have rushed out, but it wasn't until a nod from Ryan confirmed the going that the wily Purcell managed to take himself clumsily out of the way.

Ryan hesitated for a moment while the sergeant looked at him questioningly. Then he forced a smile.

"He didn't mean it, Tom," he said, "forget it."

BUT to Reynolds the scene was still white-hot in its intensity. His swift rush carried him to his desk in the rooms given over to the Tapanon and from one of its drawers he took the "gun" that had been given him by Joe Smith, patrolman, whose gratitude for favors at Reynolds's hands had found expression in the gift of his police revolver. It had lain unloaded, virtually forgotten, for many, many months. Now, as Reynolds drew it from its place, he clicked it idly until the barrel had spun around twice without fault, and from a dust-covered box of cartridges he filled the chambers. There was a setness of face about him that made of the task a grim ceremony.

If you can picture to yourself the sharpness of the revolt that had come to Reynolds's soul; if you can imagine the accumulation of bitterness that now suddenly sought to find a way out; if you can understand how long years of repression not only of this but of other emotions demanded by Reynolds's "business," could dam up a tidal wave—if you can see all of this, it is a certainty that there won't be any thought of melodrama for you, nor any touch of the theatric, in Reynolds's attidute; but, rather, a sequence as logical as it was inevitable.

Understand, though, I don't believe that Reynolds meant all that his actions might have implied. The reagent that finally crystallized his mind to a possibly definite decision came when he had gone to the rooms above the Tapanon and there drew the loaded revolver from his pocket, the while he contemplated it with a rueful smile. Edith walked in suddenly to where he stood, as he held the revolver in his hands. He flushed guiltily when she reached his side before he could hide the weapon from her eyes.

"Jim!" she called. "What are you doing with that? Things aren't going badly, are they?"

Reynolds shook as though with an ague.

"It's all right, Edith," he answered presently, as quietly as his emotion would let him. "It's all right with me. The matter's with Ryan. He—he thinks he's going to close me up here." Recollection of the interview just passed grew keener, and he went on, "I've told him that I'm tired of his fight against me, Edith, and if he comes here I'm—I'm going to kill him."

She reached out her hands to him, her fingers gripped his in a sudden spasm of force, and her lips begged him:

"No! Jim, no!"

Her tense grip relaxed as suddenly as it had tightened. Before he could reach out to her, she had fallen from him to the floor. Reynolds was beside her in an instant, his face wild with fright. Then the heavy lines of fierce anger returned, deepened.

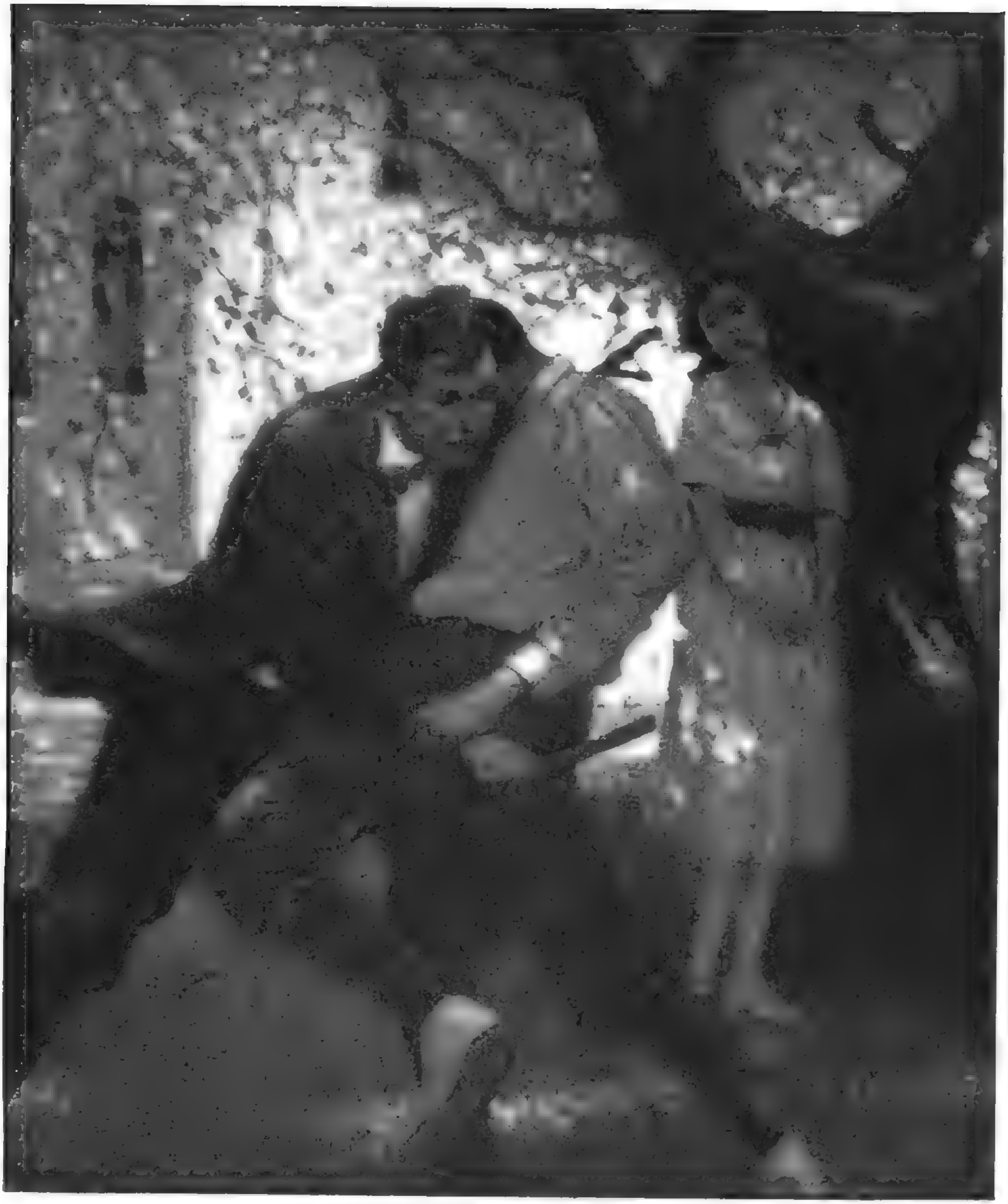
"I *will* kill him!" he muttered. "I will! I will!"

And that night the Tapanon ruled as it had formerly ruled, nightly for a week, for two weeks, for a month, and still there came no sign from the second precinct.

Ryan was facing something he had never faced before.

"I can't do it," he was saying to himself almost daily in the solitude of his office as the reports came in from patrolmen and plain-clothes men anent the Tapanon. "I can't do it. I didn't know it was against her. I can't hurt her again. I didn't know—I didn't think."

And he set his face stoically against the vague insinuations that commenced to seep in to him from various sources. He let pass without a word the knowing attitude that he surprised now and again as his men handed in their reports on 200 Mulberry Street. As he thought it over again



It began twenty years ago when Jim Reynolds—he was called Tiny Reynolds then—caught up with Dan Ryan and Edith Barber on the way home from school. Tiny reached over and took Edith's books. "Real genuine hate once aroused," said McTurner, "is like a cobra. It's deathless, deathless as love."

and again, the conviction became more and more definite that a move against Reynolds would mean that Reynolds would seek to make good his threat. And if Reynolds made good—Edith—perhaps?

He could get no further in all the times that he thought it over. Always looming clear in his mind was the certainty that Reynolds would shoot. And if Reynolds did that—did—that—did that. Suddenly Ryan's mind shot off at an odd tangent.

IN A rush of excited hope, he hurried down to the water-front where the lumber yards of T. H. Donovan & Company stretched out over acres and acres. Old "T. H.," as everybody called him, was just getting ready to go out when Ryan arrived.

"T. H., you're going to do something for me," was Ryan's word when he had backed the old fellow into his private office. "You're going to give Jim Reynolds a job with T. H. Donovan & Company."

"Dan, boy, is it yourself that's talking, that's asking that? Or am I just dreaming it?"

"It's me, all right," Ryan half groaned, half laughed in reply. "I can't tell you about it, T. H.—what you don't know is going to be good for you here, I guess. But I've always remembered your word, since the time that we cleared Tim, that whenever I asked, you'd do me the biggest favor one man could do for another. I'm asking it now, T. H. What I want is a chance for—for myself."

"And you're asking me to give Reynolds a job?" T. H. Donovan's voice was as much surprised as his face.

"I don't know, T. H., if he'll take it," Ryan answered, "but I want you to offer it—and keep it open. He'd make a good man for you. You know as well as I do that he's made a lot of friends in all these years who really like him, in spite of the other things—and some of them are big people who might be your customers just as well as not. Reynolds would be a good salesman for you. I'll bet he'd make good for you. They'd help him out, if he got going straight."

"It isn't that I'm thinking about, Dan," the other assured him. "It's you—are you quitting?"

A deep red dyed Ryan's face, for all his years as a police officer.

"I can't tell you about it, T. H.," he said again. "It's something—something I've got to keep to myself. But it's all right, T. H.—and you'll do it, won't you, and never tell a living soul?"

Two, three, four days passed, and Ryan had a telephone call that took him once more to the water-front.

"He won't do it, Dan," Donovan saluted him. "He thanked me—and, by gravy I like him; I'd like to have him with me—but he says he can't, he won't get out now. He's as stubborn as a mule about it. What's it all about, anyway, Dan?"

Ryan shook his head negatively.

"Did you tell him you'd keep the offer open?" he countered. "You did? Thanks, T. H. Maybe it'll be all right, anyway."

And presently Ryan found his way back to the second precinct station, thinking, thinking. "I wonder if there isn't some way—I wonder if I couldn't——" He snapped his finger and thumb excitedly.

"H'mmmm— H'mmmm," he ruminated as one might who was trying to get clear in his mind the details of a blurred picture.

"I *could* do it," he found himself saying. The memory of a police revolver given to Reynolds came to him—he had been present at Patrolman Smith's trial for this breach of discipline—and he jumped to his feet.

"I *could* do it!" he repeated, addressing the walls about him. "They'd never guess," he assured himself and the walls. "Only T. H. I'd just have to take my chances, and if— But they'd never know. And, anyway, it would be for her, and I've bruised her and hurt her—I owe it to her. And if Reynolds sees—if he sees—" Ryan's monolog blurred again into a strange picture.

"Yes," he said finally. "I *could* do it! I *will* do it!"

So he laughed when the newspapers joined in the chorus of insinuations that came now direct and strong.

"It'll fix us both," he chuckled, "and they'll never guess!"

The order that went out forthwith took six men with Ryan to the doors at 200 Mulberry Street that night. There, Ryan gave his final command.

"Wait until you hear from me," he said. "I'm going to see first if he won't come quietly."

There was no hint of it from the windows, but the Tapanon was in full swing. The lights burned free over the tables and the poor fools and the happy fools sat about them as they had long been accustomed to sit while a fickle goddess reigned. But for the nonce they were without the presence of Reynolds. He had been called some minutes earlier to decide whether little Jim had a croupy cough or just a plain cough.

BEFORE Elias, the colored porter who presided over the door, could deny him, Ryan had brushed him aside. Once inside, he closed the door and demanded Reynolds. Elias tremblingly pointed the way to the upper floors, then thought better of his admission and seized the captain, probably with some faint idea of stopping his progress. If it did nothing else, it brought Reynolds out into the hall above just as Ryan started up the stairs.

An instant only was needed for recognition, and Reynolds reached mechanically for his revolver. In a moment more, it gleamed in his hand. Ryan gave no heed that he had seen.

"I've come to talk it over with you, Jim," he began.

But even as he spoke, the nervous finger on the trigger had been pressed home. Just once it spoke. Then, as Reynolds held out a hand imploringly—a hand that would have reached out to stay what had already taken place—Ryan toppled forward at his feet.

Not dead, though, or even stunned; for while he was yet falling the words came quick and sharp.

"What gun is that Reynolds?" he demanded. "Is it the police gun? Quick!"

Even lying prone, his intensity dominated the situation. As Edith came running to him and tried to kneel beside him on the floor, he waved her away with a roughness that was fairly brutal.

"What gun is that, Reynolds?" he repeated insistently.

The sharp repetition of the question aroused the man who had shot him. Reynolds knelt beside the prone form and held out the revolver in a hand that shook as if it had the palsy.

Ryan summoned all his energy, reached for the gun, and grasped it.

"I thought so," he cried, a note of triumph in his voice. He gripped the weapon tight with one hand and fumbled with the other in his hip pocket.

"Here, Reynolds, take this!" came the command in another moment. Reynolds's fingers found a cold revolver-barrel in their grip.

"Jim—Edith," Ryan whispered vibrantly, "I shot myself! Your gun hasn't been used, Jim. My gun—" he tapped the weapon that was gripped fast in his hand—"my gun caught—in my trousers, as I pulled it out. I shot myself! Understand? Understand?"

From below came a crash as of splintering wood. The words came quicker from the dominant figure on the floor. His voice rang sharply pleading.

"Jim! Donovan? You're going there?"

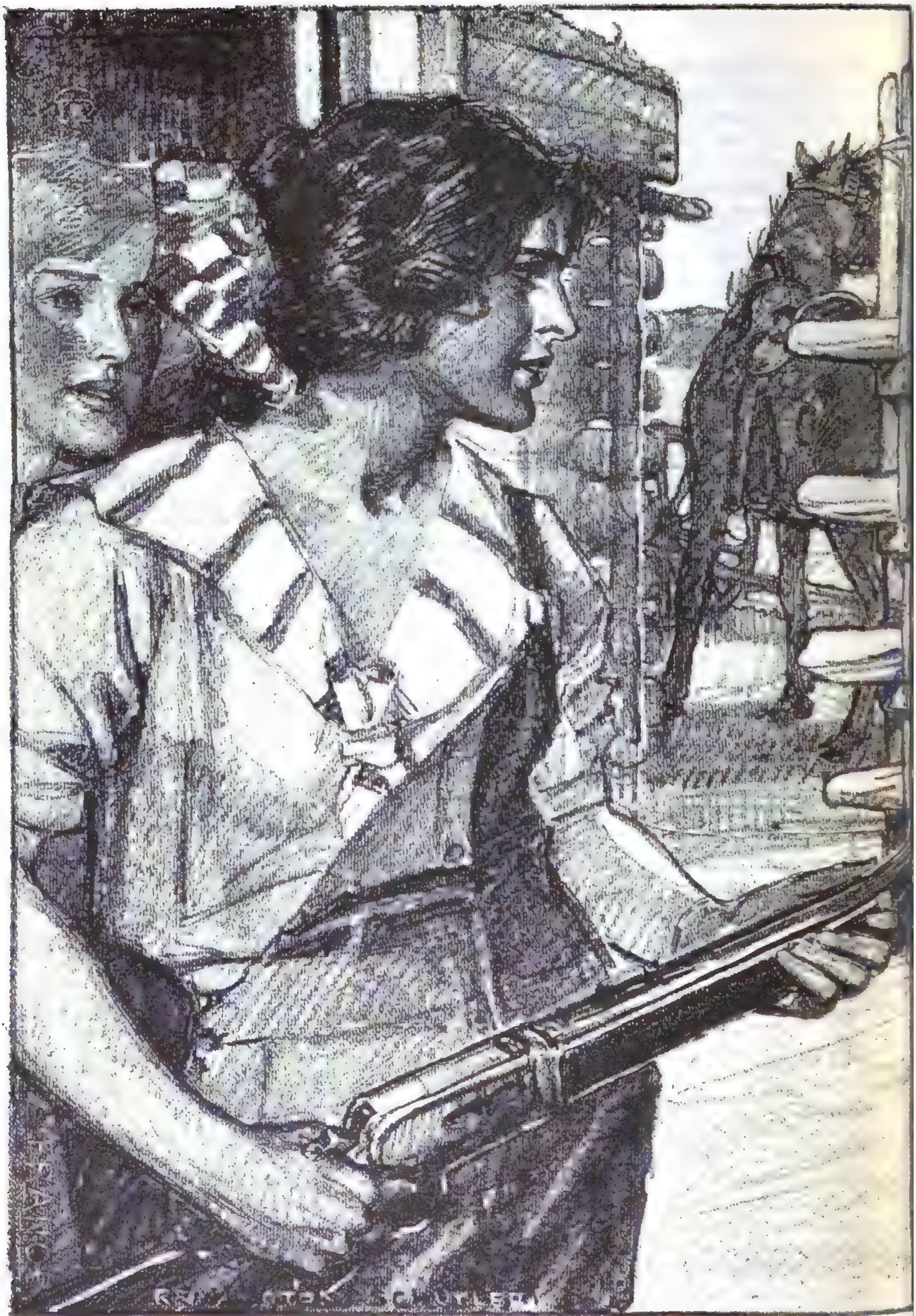
While he was yet speaking, a group of blue-clad figures leaped upon Reynolds, but Ryan still commanded.

"Let him alone!" he stormed at them. "Let him alone, I say! I shot myself. My gun caught. He hadn't used his. I——"

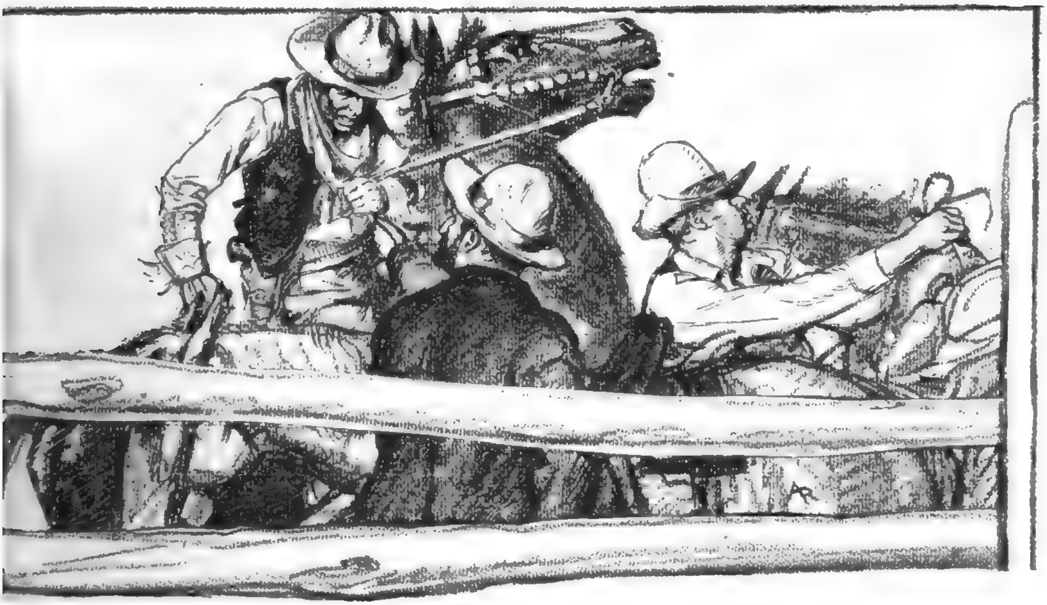
His voice trailed off weakly and his eyes turned to where Edith knelt. Then they turned to where Reynolds knelt, lingered for an instant. There was a glance that answered his questioning look. "It's for Edith," he managed to say before his eyes went closed again, and a twitch of pain seemed to move his form. The group of policemen, standing uncertainly in back of Reynolds, whither they had retreated at Ryan's forceful command, stood as though they did not know quite what to make of it, did not know what to do. Ryan opened his eyes again.

"I'm glad," he whispered triumphantly to Edith and Jim, his voice so low that it could not reach the others. Then, observing the officers and lifting himself an inch or two from the floor, his voice gathered strength. "And—and—damn it all!" He spoke in a half-shout. "Don't stand there like a lot of ninnies, the lot of you! Get me an ambulance! I—I——" His voice sank once more until it sounded like a fevered mutter, "I've fixed it—I've squared myself—and I'm going to get well at that!"

*Everybody's Magazine, September, 1921*



Hazel, standing in the doorway, watched the baffled cavalcade disappear round the bend in the draw. "I guess," she said, "I'd better load this rifle."



# The Rider of Golden Bar*

*While the Sheriff Flees for His Life, Hazel Falls Victim to the Machinations of the Political Ring*

## By William Patterson White

*Author of "Paradise Bend," "Hidden Trails," "Lynch Lawyers," etc.*

Illustrations by Remington Schuyler

THE amiable gentlemen who controlled the political activities of Crocker County decided, owing to the dissatisfaction of a number of good citizens who were growing restive under a régime of graft too blatantly pursued, that the time was ripe for a popular candidate for sheriff. They agreed therefore to elect a man of unblemished reputation—one who should also be an easy-going fellow and not too inclined to take his duties seriously. Tip O'Gorman proposed Billy Wingo, a popular young man who apparently had never had a single serious thought in his life. Tip guaranteed that Billy would see only those things which were pointed out to him. Billy was elected, much to the satisfaction of all concerned. The joy of the political ring was, however, short-lived. The new sheriff, suddenly realizing that he now was in a position to marry, developed an alarming zeal in the pursuit of his new duties. His activities so worried those shady dealers in land and cattle, Rafe Tuckleton and Skinny Shindle and their partners in iniquity, Justice of the Peace Driver and District Attorney Arthur Rale, that they speedily took counsel among themselves as to how they might best put him out of the way.

Hazel Walton, the beautiful cause of ambitions in Billy's hitherto placid existence, heard, by chance, black threats against his life. She became terribly worried

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for fear that he might be killed, and begged him to resign. Billy was in no mood to play the quitter, and when she told him that she could not marry a man whose life was in constant danger, lost his temper and told her wrathfully that he had asked her for the last time to marry him. "If you ever change your mind," he said, "you will have to come to me and tell me that I was right and you were wrong."

Dan Slike, a professional gunman, after an interview with Judge Driver and his pleasant friends, agreed to settle the count against the sheriff and also that against Tom Walton, Hazel's uncle, who was too honest to be allowed at large. The trap was laid, and one day Billy received a note from Hazel asking him to come to her at once. Unfortunately for the success of the plot, Billy was suspicious of forgeries. He also knew that Hazel was visiting friends many miles away. Nevertheless, Billy went to the Walton ranch, taking with him, at the point of his gun, the thoroughly frightened judge. Slike had already shot Walton and when Driver appeared with the sheriff, believing himself double-crossed, he shot down the rascally judge before he himself fell badly wounded by the sheriff.

With Slike in jail and the sheriff still pursuing his course of righteousness, the ring was considerably worried. They had failed once, they must not fail again. O'Gorman held out for persuasive measures, and by so doing lost even more favor with certain of his henchmen, who were against what they considered his pussy-footing methods. He had heartily disapproved of the murder of Walton, and there were those who held that life would be more satisfactory in Crocker County if Tip should join his late friend.

One night of heavy rain the sheriff, reading alone in his office, heard a thump against the door followed by a muffled wail. Opening the door, he found a woman lying on the doorstep. He bent over her and—smash!

When Billy opened his eyes he found that he was in Sam Lardner's house a mile from town. Sam, Felix Craft and Tip O'Gorman were watching him. Tip explained that they had a little matter of business to discuss with him and preferred to do it undisturbed. "Give us your word that you won't bother us, Bill," said Tip, "and you can walk out the door." "And if I refuse?" asked the sheriff. Felix Craft rose clad in Billy's clothes. "This afternoon," he said with a grin, "you hold up the Hillsville stage. Everybody on the stage will be able to swear to your clothes and your horse and your guns. One of your guns has a brass guard. That gun especially will be remembered."

Billy looked at him. "How about the Wells-Fargo guard? You want this thing to go smoothly, Felix, old-timer. Suppose you get plugged?"

"Never mind the guard," Tip quickly cut off the rather too voluble explanation of the others. "We've figured this thing out to the last li'l detail."

BILLY, through half-shut eyes, was watching the men he was talking to. He was watching Sam Larder especially. For Sam was not a good poker-player. Never had been. His plump features were too expressive. And now the open-faced Sam was looking at Billy with a slightly worried expression. Furthermore, the worry was tinged with some astonishment. At least so it seemed to Billy. Again why?

Here again had cropped up and out those unnatural circumstances so ably dwelt upon by Mr. William Noy. As has been said, the law abhors such things and seeks a remedy. There is always a remedy; and investigation, patient and thorough, will always find it. Billy rather prided himself on being a patient and thorough investigator.

Nevertheless he did not fail to realize that he was in a tight hole. He felt the pinch already. So he smiled at the three men his sunniest smile.

"Looks like a wild night on the canal," he said calmly. "I expect the mules are pinning back their ears. Yeah. Going, Crafty? Well, be good and—oh, say, Crafty, ain't Jerry Fern the stage-driver this trip?"

"I don't know," was the short reply.

"But you knew everything else," complained Billy, making a mental note of another unnatural circumstance. "Seems like you'd oughta know this, too."

"Well, I don't," Craft tossed back over his shoulder as he flung out of the house.

The door slammed. Billy looked at Sam Larder and grinned. "If this is Jerry Fern's trip, and I'm most sure it is, Felix will be out of luck. Jerry is one stage-driver who will always give a bandit a battle."

"Oh, I guess Crafty will get the drop on him all right," Sam Larder averred easily—too easily by half.

"I can see," said Billy with strange placidity, "I can see that I've got to get out of here."

Both Sam and Tip laughed—Tip heartily, Sam with a false note.

"Well, anyway," resumed Billy, "I've got my choice of hitting the trail or being arrested."

Tip shook his head. "You haven't any choice—none. You see, we talked it over again while you were asleep a while back, and we decided if you couldn't see our way of it and be sensible like we want that we'd better just put you where you wont be mislaid. Givin' you your choice of ridin' away or bein' arrested like I said at first would be a bad move. If you chose to hit the trail—You're a sport with ideas, Bill, and you might think up one to put the kybosh on us. But if you're in jail your ideas wont help you much. See?"

"I see I ain't gonna get a chance for my alley a-tall. Who'll arrest me—my own deputies?"

"No, we'll do that. Here's the story: Your horse gave out and Sam caught you trying to rustle a pony out of his corral. Sam threw down on you, held you up and when we, Sam, Crafty and I, y'understand, searched you, we found on you a couple of pocket-books and Jerry Fern's watch. See?"

"I see all right. I see you haven't been quite open with our friend Mr. Craft."

"How do you make that out?"

Billy hunched his shoulders. He was observing the marked unease that spread upon the countenance of Sam Larder. Tip was forced to repeat his question.

Billy gazed at him vacantly. "Huh? How—uh—oh, you want to know *how*, do you? Is that it? Yeah. Well, I'll tell you. Here you knew alla time that Jerry Fern was going to drive the stage this trip and yet you didn't tell Crafty. He didn't know who was the driver when I asked him, remember? You should have told him, Tip. Skin game not to."

Tip laughed. Was the laughter forced? Billy thought it sounded as if it were. But he couldn't be sure. Not with Tip O'Gorman. For Tip was a good poker-player. Still——

Billy wagged a forefinger at Tip. "Why didn't you tell Crafty, you careless child?"

"Crafty knew all right," Tip stated. "He was just joking with you, I guess."

"I guess so too," drawled Billy Wingo. "I guess so too. How about a drink, Tip? I'm thirsty."

"Sam will get you a drink," said Tip.

Billy smiled. "Why not you? Can't you trust me with Sam? Think I'll corrupt his morals or something?"

"There's no telling what you'll do, Bill, and as I may have told you once or twice we can't afford to take any chances."

"When am I going to be arrested for rustling one of Sam's horses?"

"Soon after Crafty gets here."

"Sam," said Billy, when the owner of the house appeared with the drink, "Sam, how about a li'l hot something to eat? I know it's only the shank of the afternoon, but I'm hungry and I probably have a long hard night ahead of me."

"You have all right," concurred Sam, easing his fat self into a chair and beginning to construct a cigarette.

Billy elevated his eyebrows. "Say, I thought I asked you for something to eat?"

Sam ran his tongue along the side of the cigarette. "I heard you, but I don't cook a thing till supper. That's flat. I been in and out of that kitchen all day and I've got enough, you bet you."

"You don't have to cook anythin' yourself. Let your cook do it."

"I let him go to town for the day."

"I don't s'pose you could persuade one of your boys to throw a li'l bite together for me, now, could you?"

Sam shook a decided head. "I couldn't, Bill. There ain't a boy on the place. I sent them all down on the Wagonjack to fence off a quicksand."

Billy closed his eyes to conceal the satisfaction in their depths. Not a man on the place! Which was just what he had been working to find out. But the odds were still two to one—and an armed two to a weaponless one at that. When Craft returned, they would be three to one—provided Billy still was a prisoner.

He surveyed his captors through droplidded eyes. Sam Larder was looking out of the window. But Tip was on the alert even as he had been from the beginning. And Billy knew well that Tip would not hesitate to shoot. Most decidedly the future did not look bright and shining. But Billy's was a confident nature.

"What's that?" queried Tip.

"What do—oh, that! Simon says 'thumbs up,' you mean? It doesn't mean anythin' serious, Tip. Just another way of saying, 'Faint heart never won a bet in its life' and 'It's always darkest 'round midnight.' Don't mind if I take a snooze, do you, Tippy, old boy?"

Billy rolled over on his stomach, rammed his head into the pillow and completely relaxed his body; but, although his breathing soon became deceptively regular, he was far from being asleep. He was thinking as purposefully as ever he had in his life. He had to escape. *He had to!* To permit his enemies to do this thing was intolerable. There was a way out. Every strait, no matter how close and awkward it may be, has its way out.

He built many plans while he lay there. But there was a flaw in each and every one of them. His brain was still feverishly busy when Felix Craft returned about the middle of the afternoon.

AS THE door opened and Craft entered, Billy sat up. "Have a nice time?" he drawled.

"Went through like clockwork," replied Craft, slumping into a chair.

"Not even a li'l teeny-weeny hole in you anywhere?" Billy demanded hopefully. "Hell, I shore had a better opinion of Jerry Fern than that."

"Jerry didn't do any fightin' to-day," said Felix. "Handed over his watch like a major."

"Yeah, Tip said you'd take his watch. Funny you didn't know Jerry Fern was driving this trip when I asked you. Tip knew."

"Oh, I knew all right," Craft said carelessly. "Lord A'mighty, I'm hungry. My stomach is sticking to my backbone closer than a postage-stamp to a letter. I ain't had a thing to eat since breakfast. Got any more eggs and ham, Sam?"

"If you want anything to eat, you can cook it yourself," said Sam. "It's like I told Bill here, I aint goin' into that kitchen till suppertime."

"That's always the way," grumbled Craft, kicking his chair back. "Here I ride from hell to breakfast and back—and I wanna say again that having that hold-up fifteen miles from here was too much of a good thing. Just as well have had it two or three miles away. It wouldn't have made a bit of difference, not a smidgin, by Gawd."

"You know, Felix," defended Tip, "that we had it fifteen miles away so the give-out horse of Bill's would look more natural."

"Damn his give-out horse," snarled Craft, moving stiffly toward the hall leading to the kitchen. "I wish it had give out before I was born."

"So you found out how rough-gaited the pinto was, did you, Felix?" Billy observed sweetly. "Do you know, I had an idea you would. Yeah. You don't ride enough, that's whatsa matter. Stick too close behind your faro-box, you do. Y'oughta try the open air and the range more. Tell you, Felix, I'll gamble you'll do more ridin' and less card-playin' in the next sixty days than you ever did in any two months of your life before. In round numbers I'll bet you ride more than six hundred miles in the next two months. Go you a hundred even. The bet payable in Golden Bar sixty days—say any time after the first day of June."

"Humor him, Crafty," suggested Tip, glad of the diversion. "Sometimes they turn real violent."

"Make it five hundred even," said Craft, who was nothing if not commercial.

Billy smiled pityingly. "You poor feller! But you've asked for it. Five hundred she is. It'll have to be a finger bet, because I haven't a cent with me."

"Your word's good," said Craft and went on his way.

"How about you fellers?" Billy pursued brightly. "Any chance of my turning a honest penny? I'll go you both the same as Crafty. I suppose my word's good."

"Better than gold," declared Tip; "but I don't see how you're going to check up on anybody's riding."

Billy waved a complacent hand. "That's the least of my troubles. How about it? You fellers want to bet? No? Aw right, my loss is your gain. Tippy, I wonder if you'd mind opening the door and hollering to Felix to fry me up a mess of eggs while he's at it? Tell him to let 'em lay. That's the way I like 'em. I thank you."

When Felix Craft brought the eggs, he drew up at one side of the table and Billy at the other. The platter of eggs was between them. Tip looked on from his seat near the fireplace. Sam lounged comfortably in his chair.

Billy looked with a dissatisfied air upon the eggs. "Ain't there any bread, Felix? One thing I like is to sort of smush a piece of bread round my eggs till it gets all gooey and good. A li'l butter on the bread wouldn't hurt neither."

So Felix made another trip to the kitchen. When he returned with the bread and butter, Billy discovered that the pepper had been overlooked.

"For Gawd's sake use salt on 'em!" implored Felix. "I never use pepper, I don't. Salt is just as good. Healthier, too."

"But I don't like salt," protested Billy. "I've got no manner of use for it. I want pepper, I do."

"Use salt," mumbled Craft, stoking busily.

Billy pushed right back from the table and refused to be comforted. "I want some pepper! Whatsa matter with you jiggers—tryin' to starve me to death? Sam, you lazy lump of slumgullion, get me some pepper, will you?"

"No, I won't. I'm too comfortable and you're too finicky."

Bill glanced across at Tip. "You going to refuse me too, Tip, old citizen?"

"No," said Tip with a weary air, "I suppose not."

He arose and betook himself to the kitchen. Returning with a large old-fashioned tin pepper pot he thumped it down upon the table in front of the captive. "There y'are. Now, stop your squalling."

"Thank you, Tippy, I will. Yeah."

Billy scraped up to the table as Tip turned away. "What's the matter with this pepper pot anyway?"

Tip turned to look. Billy picked up the pepper pot slowly and stared hard at it. Felix Craft craned his neck.

"I don't see anything the matter with it," said Craft.

"Don't you?" murmured Billy, his fingers busy with the removable top. "Look here."

Sam Larder did not move, but both Tip and Craft obeyed. In fact, they obeyed with such good will that the handful of pepper that Billy instantly swept into their faces dusted up their nostrils as well as into their eyes.

In throwing the pepper Billy had employed his left hand. This left hand had not completed the motion before Billy was reaching for the platter of eggs with his right hand.

It was unfortunate for Sam Larder that he was a slow-going gentleman. The platter struck him edgewise over the eye when his six-shooter had barely cleared the holster. The six-shooter thudded to the floor. Sam and his chair went over backward and lay together in a tangle amid the fragments of broken platter and the remains of several eggs.

Billy, arriving in Sam's immediate neighborhood a split second after Sam struck the floor, scooped up the fallen six-shooter and wheeled back to face his other two enemies. But they were too occupied with their very real misery to be a further menace. Felix Craft was sitting on the floor clawing at his eyes and swearing continuously. Tip, coughing and sneezing, was not swearing. Perhaps he had not sufficient breath. At any rate he was on his feet, arms spread wide, feeling his way along the wall toward the door giving into the hall.

Billy cat-footed up behind Tip and snatched away his six-shooter. Tip spun round at the touch but Billy dodged away from the clutching hands.

Bang! a revolver bullet cut a button from his vest and tucked into the wall at his elbow. Billy's sudden movement had saved his life. He leaped back another two yards to get out of the smoke and crouched, balancing his tense body on the balls of his feet.

He saw beyond the table Felix Craft with a gun in each hand. The gambler's face, despite the tears that overflowed his eyes and ran down his cheeks, was fairly murderous.

"Tip! Where are you? Don't you move, Bill," Craft was saying, the barrels of his two guns weaving to and fro uncertainly. "Get away from that door, Bill. Don't you try and get away. I can see you."

Billy leaned forward, picked up a fork from his set-out on the table and flung it across the room. It fell with a clatter. Craft fired at the sound. The next instant Billy kicked him under the chin and flattened him out.

"First time I ever saw a feller shoot by ear," observed Billy, calmly divesting Craft of his gun-belt and exchanging Sam's six-shooter for his own gun with the brass trigger-guard. "He did pretty good, considering. Tip, don't you try to bluff me, like Crafty, that you can see. Hey! do you want to be the third senseless man in this room?"

Tip answered the question by halting his groping way toward the speaker. He stood still, his body swaying, his muscular fingers locked in the palms of his hands. Billy stooped over the senseless Craft and whipped off his neckerchief.

"Put your hands behind you, Tip," he directed.

"Damfi will!" Tip declared.

"I don't want to whang you over the head, Tip, but I'll have to if you won't be good. Stick 'em behind you."

Tip hesitated, then suddenly he thrust his hands behind him. Billy slipped round him, laid his six-shooter on a chair seat and drew the handkerchief beneath Tip's crossed wrists. The next instant Tip had whirled about, Tip's knee was between his legs and Tip's long arms were wrapped round him in an underhold.

Tip was essaying the wrestling chip Cumberland men call the swinging hype. It is a crack chip and when well done is disastrous to an opponent. But it must be well done —the right arm under, hyping with the right leg and striking outside with the left. Fortunately for Bill, Tip, although his right arm was under in a strong hold, had made the mistake of sticking his left knee between Bill's legs. He struck outside with his right leg and missed. With the right arm under he had not the leverage he should have had.

Billy, fighting for his life, dropped his arms—backheeled Tip and ran over him. Thump! The wrestlers, Tip underneath, landed full upon the senseless back of Felix Craft. Tip freed a hand, writhed his body sidewise and struck viciously at Billy's unprotected stomach. He struck too low and the blow glanced off Billy's hipbone. Billy, striking in turn, drove a smashing right against the point of Tip's chin. Tip merely grunted and struck again at Billy's stomach. Billy parried the blow with his left and brought up his knee with the laudable intention of kicking Tip in the abdomen.

Blinded though he was, Tip apparently sensed what was impending, for he crowded his body against Billy and struck outside with all his might. In an instant Tip was on top and Billy underneath. The older man jammed both thumbs into Billy's windpipe and wrenched himself astride Billy's body. The strangling Billy spread wide his legs, hunched up his knees, planted both feet against Tip's ribs and straightened his legs with a jerk. Tip's hands were torn loose from Billy's throat and Tip himself crashed backward against the wall.

Billy scrambled to his feet and without the slightest hesitation clipped Tip over the head with the barrel of his six-shooter. Tip remained where he was. Billy stood over him, pistol poised, till he made sure he was senseless. Then he took pains to make fast the trio's respective arms and legs with strips torn from a nightgown belonging to Sam. He likewise removed his spurs from Craft's heels to his own.

This being done he stripped Tip and Sam of their gun-belts, gathered up all the guns and ran out into the kitchen. Here, on the floor, Craft had thrown his saddle, bridle and saddle-blanket. Bill added the lot to his burden and sped out to the corral. The pinto was there, looking very tired. Bill hastily unstrapped his rope and dropped the loop over a rangy-bodied chestnut with good legs and a mule stripe. This animal he bridled and saddled, left it standing and ran back to Sam's storeroom for another set of horse equipment. It was his laudable intention to pack the unconscious Felix into town and jail him for the stage-coach robbery. It was a bold plan, but Billy always rather favored the bold plan. The plan had not occurred to him till almost the instant of throwing the pepper so he had had no time to mature it thoroughly, but it seemed to contain more elements of success than any other because it would forestall his enemies' scheme so neatly. With Craft in jail and wearing the clothing worn by the robber, to which clothing the complaisant Jerry Fern and his passengers would undoubtedly be prepared to swear, it would be hard indeed, if Bill could not fasten the robbery on Craft.

He led the two horses to the kitchen door and went within to fetch out Felix Craft.

It must have been his good angel who caused him to look through the front window. He looked and saw a cloud of horsemen scouring toward the ranch-house. Sam's field-glasses were on the shelf above the window. He opened the window, snatched up the glasses and focused them on the approaching riders. He immediately recognized, to his great disgust, half a dozen of Sam Larder's punchers. Obviously they had completed the fencing-off of the quicksand sooner than expected.

"This," said Billy, dropping the glasses and leaving the room at speed, "is no place for me."

At the first sight of the riders he had abandoned the plan of taking Felix Craft to town. He would be hard put to escape himself. A burdened led horse was an impossibility, even if he had had time to carry out Craft and tie him to the saddle. The punchers would be at the ranch-house in another sixty seconds, and if they should discover him with their bound and unconscious employer and two of his friends, they would shoot first and ask questions later. Any one would—under the circumstances.

Billy topped his mount, struck in the spurs and fled. The other horse he perforce left standing.

As he flashed past the corner of the building, one of Larder's punchers raised a yell. Some well-meaning fool fired. Zung-g! the bullet buzzed overhead. Smack! Zung-g! Smack! Several bits of lead either ripped past his ears or tucked into the posts of the corral he was skirting. It was borne in upon him that the Larder employees were mistaking him for a horse-thief, or some one worse.

He leaned over his saddle-horn and began to ride. From the Larder corral to a clump of trees on the edge of a draw was a long hundred yards. As Billy galloped in among the trees he glanced over his shoulder. The corral concealed the horsemen. He pulled up at the edge of the draw, slid down the bank in a shower of stones and dirt, turned sharp to the left at the bottom and tore ahead. A mile farther on he looked back. No one was in sight yet.

"Ropin' themselves fresh horses," was his muttered verdict. "Damitall, running away was about the worst thing I could have done after all! But what else was there to do, I'd like to know? If I'd stayed I'd have been plugged for a holdup and now I'm a heap likely to be lynched for a horse-thief and a holdup both."

He knew what he might expect from the brisk Larder outfit after Sam had given it his careful version of the stage robbery.

"And that goes double for the rest of the county," he said to himself, staring ahead over the flattened ears of his racing horse. "I'll have to do some almighty tall hustling, that's a cinch."

Two miles and a half from the clump of trees at the back of Larder's corral he turned his horse and scuffled up the right-hand bank of the draw. At the top he looked back. He could see the clump of trees quite plainly and below it, in the bottom of the draw, were several black beads. He counted four beads. No doubt the remaining beads were spreading out to right and left to head him off.

"Thank Gawd for the mule stripe," he muttered piously, trotting onward. "We'll diddle 'em yet, old-timer."

He came to a stream and rode in it till almost sunset when he left it, dismounted beside a tall cottonwood and shinned to the top. To his earnest satisfaction he saw, hopelessly distant and following utterly wrong lines, the tiny black beads that were his pursuers.

"And that's that," said Billy Wingo, rustling groundward rapidly.

NATE SAMSON, weighing sugar for Hazel Walton, looked at her sidewise. "Heard the news, Hazel?"

She removed her gaze from the flyspecked window and stared abstractedly at Nate. "What news?"

"Somebody killed Tip O'Gorman in his own house last night."

Nate's hand pushed the sliding weight several notches along the scale beam. Red Herring, the town marshal, slouching with seeming aimlessness against a show-case at the other end of the counter, covertly watched the girl.

"Somebody killed Tip O'Gorman in his own house last night," said Nate.

Hazel wondered why Nate's eyes never left her face. "Tip O'Gorman! He was one of Uncle Tom's friends. Who did it?"

Nate's eyes were fairly devouring her. The man looked positively pleased. "They don't know yet. But—" He paused.

She waited. What was he goggling and boggling at? "Well?"

"They found Bill Wingo's quirt on the floor beside the body and right inside the door a snakeskin hatband the whole town knows belongs to Bill."

Hazel's cheeks began to glow. "That doesn't prove anything," she declared in a level voice. "Bill owns three quirts to my knowledge, and he hasn't worn that snake hatband since last July. It began to stretch then and was always working up off the crown, and he couldn't tighten it without ruining the skin, so he stopped wearing it."

"It worked off the crown of his hat once too often last night," offered Nate.

Hazel's black eyes were glittering through slittered eyelids. Really, Nate Samson should have been warned.

"You think Bill did it?" asked Hazel Walton.

Nate nodded. "So does everybody else."

This was not strictly true. Billy Wingo had several warm friends.

"At any rate," Nate pursued with relish, "there's a warrant out for Bill."

"Another warrant!" Hazel's hand moved imperceptibly nearer a broad-bladed cheese-knife that lay on the counter.

"Another warrant. You bet another warrant. That makes three counts he's wanted on—stage robbery, rustling that chestnut horse of Sam Larder's and now this murder. I always said Bill Wingo was too good to be true."

Hazel Walton made no further remark. She reached for the cheese-knife. Nate Samson ducked under the counter. The cheese-knife whirred within an inch of his prickling scalp and stuck quivering in the edge of a shelf.

"Liar!" announced Hazel in a loud, unsympathetic tone. "I'm only sorry I haven't a gun with me. Talking like that about a man you're not fit to say hello to. Here, I don't want any of this stuff! You can keep it."

So saying she toppled over her whole pile of wrapped purchases and marched out of the store. The marshal followed her to the door. He returned to his post at the counter a minute later.

"It's all right, Nate," he said. "She's gone over to the other store."

ARRIVED home, Hazel unhitched and unharnessed, turned the team into the corral and carried her purchases into the kitchen and dumped them on the table. She hung up her man's hat on one of the hooks that held the Winchester, and fluffed the hair about her temples by the aid of the mirror that hung below the Terry clock her uncle had brought west with him. She had always liked the Terry clock—from the cheerful painted pumpkins and grapes that graced the patterned top to the peculiar throbbing ring it gave on striking the hour she liked it.

And on a day the old clock was destined to repay that liking full measure, pressed down and running over.

While she was fixing her hair the clock struck three.

Silently she unwrapped her bundles and stored away the contents in crock and box and drawer. A tidy person, Hazel. Then because she was still in a temper with Nate Samson she changed her dress, donned a pair of overalls and began to scrub the kitchen floor.

"Liar!" she said aloud, scraping a vigorous brush under the dresser. "Liar! I hope your old store burns up!"

So occupied was she with her thoughts and her work that she failed to hear the approach of a rider.

"'Lo, Hazel," was the rider's greeting delivered across the doorsill.

Hazel's brush stopped swishing to and fro.

"Hello, Sally Jane," she said smilingly, supporting herself on one arm and pushing back the hair that had fallen over her hot face. "Put your horse in the corral and come on in."

"I tied him to the wagon," said Sally Jane.

Out of respect for the wet floor she jigged on her heels across to a chair and seated herself, hooking her heels in a rung. Sally Jane looked at Hazel with speculation in her eyes.

"You look mad, dear," Sally Jane said.

"I am," declared Hazel, and began to sizzle anew. "Just listen," she continued, hopping up to seat herself on the table, "to what I heard in town this morning. Nate told me—"

"—there now," she concluded. "What do you think of that for a put-up job? Why, it's not even clever."

"No," agreed Sally Jane. "Too many articles belonging to Bill. Either the quirt or the hatband, but not both. I'd like to know how they got hold of them."

"They?"

"Or, he. It may have been one man and it may have been more than one. You can't tell. Tip had enemies—several. But I'm afraid the gang won't take that into consideration—much. All they'll be able to see is the quirt and the hatband. And on top of what's happened already! Confound it, Bill shouldn't have disappeared this way. All his friends know he didn't—couldn't have either held up the stage or really rustled Sam Larder's precious horse, which, by the way, was found mud to the ears near Sam's corral this morning. Fact, Dad told me. But why didn't Bill stay and face the music? That's what I'd like to know. He should have known he'd only hurt himself by running off this way. That's where he made one big mistake."

At which Hazel jumped right off the table. Her black eyes snapped. "He didn't make any mistake!" she cried. "He did just right! I know he did. If he ran—went away—he had a good reason and you can't tell me different, Sally Jane Prescott!"

The older girl threw out a hand in mock alarm. "There, there, honey, calm down. I didn't mean anything against your precious Bill. Not a thing."

"He's not my precious Bill," denied Hazel with vigor. "He's just a good fuf-friend."

Sally Jane looked at her shrewdly. "What makes you think your—friend didn't make a mistake in going away?"

"Because he couldn't make a mistake if he tried. That's why." Oh, the defiance in the voice of Hazel.

"Heavens above, child! Men are only human beings and human beings make mistakes. Bill's a man and he's liable to make mistakes like any other of them."

"Not Bill," Hazel contradicted flatly. "He—he's different. He——"

ALARUMS and excursions without—the gallop of several horses, shouts of men, the jingle and stamp of riders dismounting at the door. Entered then Felix Craft and Sam Larder with drawn guns, in their rear the district attorney, likewise with weapon displayed.

"Whose horse is that?" Craft demanded, fixing Hazel with a baleful eye.

"If you mean the one tied to the wagon," replied Hazel, "it belongs to Sally Jane Prescott."

"What of it?" demanded Sally Jane, appraising the trio with a cool glance.

"Visitors in my kitchen take off their hats," reminded Hazel severely.

The three men sheepishly removed their hats and sheathed their firearms.

"That's better," said Hazel. "You don't know how silly you looked, rushing in here brandishing your guns that way. I was quite frightened for a minute." Here she giggled and winked at Sally Jane.

"We thought maybe Bill Wingo was here," said Craft.

"And what made you think Bill Wingo was here?" asked Hazel.

"That horse outside," he replied, watching her shrewdly. "Do you mind if I search the house?"

"I certainly do mind!" cried Hazel. "You dare search this house! Just you try it!"

"Look here," said the district attorney, "if Bill Wingo ain't here, what did you go to town for to-day and buy all those supplies?"

Genuine astonishment showed on Hazel's countenance. "Those supplies were my regular supplies. Don't you suppose I buy something to eat once in a while?"

"We figure," said Sam Larder, "that Bill Wingo will have to eat right along and that unless he's left the country, it's natural he'll get his supplies from his friends, and we know that you drove in town and bought supplies this morning."

"Well, I've told you who I bought 'em for," snapped Hazel. "Anything else?"

"There is," said the district attorney. "We're going to search the house."

"You won't take my word that Bill Wingo isn't here?" demanded Hazel.

"In a matter like this we can't," replied the district attorney.

"One moment," murmured Hazel, stepping back.

The next instant she had jerked her Winchester off the hooks and cocked the hammer. "Now," she resumed, holding the weapon level with her belt, "now go ahead and search the house."

The district attorney, with a haste that was ludicrous, slid behind the fat bulk of Sam Larder. Even Felix Craft smiled.

"No more of that," Sam Larder enjoined him. "You stop your cussin', you hear. There's ladies present."

"Where?" the district attorney demanded, staring about him insolently.

"My father will ask you what you mean by that," said Sally Jane.

"I didn't mean you," mumbled the angry man, perceiving that he had gone a little too far. "I—I was a li'l hasty, I guess. No offense, ladies, I hope."

He achieved a clumsy bow and again faced Hazel. "Now, look here, you can't go on acting this way, you know. You're only hurting your own case. Be reasonable, be reasonable."

"And let you poke all through my house!" she snapped him up. "Not much. I don't want any trouble, but I'll have to shoot the first man that goes beyond this room."

"Told you you'd get her all stirred up," said Sam Larder.

"We didn't want you to come along anyway, Rale," contributed Felix Craft. "You're too buffleheaded for any human use. Y'oughta take things more easy with the girl. If you'd left it to us, everything would have been all right."

"I suppose busting in with your guns pulled is one way of taking it easy."

"I notice you had yours out," supplied Felix.

"I thought the man might be here same as you," defended the district attorney.

"Which is why you let us go first," sneered Sam.

"When you're quite through bickering among yourselves—" drawled Hazel.

"I wish you'd point that rifle somewhere else," the district attorney remarked uneasily.

"It's all right where it is," was the instant return.

The district attorney stared a moment.

"Huh!" he muttered finally and strode to the door. "Hey, Red!" he called. "Come here a minute, will you?"

The marshal sidled in, stumbling in his efforts to keep one eye on the district attorney and the other on Hazel's Winchester.

"You were in Nate Samson's store this morning, weren't you, Red?" It was more of a statement than a question.

The marshal immediately gave the district attorney the full benefit of both eyes. "Huh?"

"You were there when this girl, Miss Walton, made some purchases, weren't you?"

"Yeah," admitted the marshal.

"When Nate told her of the murder and the warrant sworn out against Bill Wingo, what did she do?"

"Why—uh—" stuttered the marshal.

"She flew into a rage, didn't she? She threw a knife at Nate, didn't she?"

"Who told you all this?" the marshal wished to know.

"Nate told me."

"Damn Nate, that's all I got to say," pronounced the marshal, disgusted. "Yes, I was there and she slung a knife at Nate. With any luck she'd have hit him and serve him right, the flat-tongued snitch."

"There now," exclaimed the triumphant district attorney, "you hear that, Miss Walton? You drove into town the morning after the murder. When you are told of the murder and the warrant, you fly into a passion and try to kill the inoffensive storekeeper who told you the news. Not content with this, you throw what you've already bought at the storekeeper and make your purchases at the other store. I have learned that among the purchases were twelve boxes of .45-90 rifle cartridges and six boxes of .45 caliber Colt cartridges. I have reason to believe that these cartridges are not intended for your personal use. In fact, I am positive you bought them for the murderer, William H. Wingo."

The marshal glanced quickly at the district attorney. He himself had not been aware of the ammunition item. The marshal inwardly cursed the district attorney and Nate Samson.

"Well," boomed the district attorney, when Hazel did not instantly speak, "what have you to say?"

"Plenty," said she then. "I bought those cartridges for my personal use. This Winchester is a .45-90 and my sixshooter is a .45. I guess I've got a right to buy ammunition now and then if I like."

"Rats!" snarled the district attorney, stiff in his conceit. "What does a girl want with two hundred and forty rifle cartridges and three hundred revolver cartridges? Those revolver cartridges especially? You won't have use for 'em in ten years. You bought them for Bill Wingo. You can't fool me! You know where he is, you know you do, and I know you do, and I intend to put you in jail as a suspicious character until you tell us where he is."

"What a filthy animal you are anyway, Rale! I didn't know such things as you lived!" Thus Sally Jane, her upper lip fairly curling with disgust.

"When I get back to Golden Bar, Miss Walton," fumed the district attorney, unmoved by the insult, "I intend to swear out a warrant for your arrest, Miss Walton, and have it served by deputy sheriffs. If necessary, I shall swear in deputies other than the two men, Shotgun Shillman and Riley Tyler, for the purpose of serving this warrant. I intend to have the law obeyed."

"She ain't busted any law that I can see," struck in Sam Larder gruffly.

Neither he nor Felix Craft had intended to go as far as an actual arrest of the girl. They were bad enough, in all conscience, but they drew the line somewhere.

Felix Craft shook his head. "No arrest, Arthur. That don't go."

"I can arrest her, I tell you," insisted the district attorney.

"No," said Craft firmly. "Miss Walton," he went on, turning to the girl, "we were a li'l excited when we came in here. Seeing that horse outside and all we got the idea that maybe Bill was here. Will you give us your word he isn't ?"

"Why, certainly," she said. "Bill isn't here, I give you my word."

"Fair enough," said Craft. "We'll be going. Come along, Arthur, move."

He and Sam hustled the district attorney out between them. Craft called in the cordon of horsemen that had surrounded the ranch-house.

"Crawl your horse, Arthur," ordered Craft. "What you waiting for?"

Hazel, standing in the doorway, watched the cavalcade disappear round the bend in the draw.

"I guess," she said, taking a box of cartridges from the top shelf and snicking open the sealing with a finger nail, "I guess I'd better load this rifle."

"BUT I rode over here especially to bring you back with me to stay a while, a long while, as long as you like and longer." Thus Sally Jane, looking injured.

Hazel shook her head. "Can't, dear. Honestly, I'd like nothing better than to go a-visiting, but I've just got to look after the ranch."

Sally Jane gazed at her friend a moment in silence, then: "You don't really have to stay here, Hazel. You only think you do. You'd much better come over and stay with us. You know I'd love to have you and this is no place for you all alone by yourself this way. Suppose——"

"Who'd hurt me?" interrupted Hazel. "Anyway, I'm not going to be driven off my own ranch by anybody. I'm going to stay here until I find a buyer for the place."

"But that may be a year," objected Sally Jane.

"It may be several years. Money's awfully tight just now, the Hillsville cashier said, the last time I was over."

"I don't care, somebody—some man ought to be here. Can't you get Ray back earlier than usual?"

Hazel shook her head. "I don't want to, Sally Jane. He went east to Missouri to visit his folks and I'm not going to spoil his good time. He'll be back in time for the spring round-up, though."

"That won't be till next month," objected Sally Jane. "Anything might happen in the meantime. Land alive, just look at this afternoon!"

"Well, look at it. Not a thing happened to hurt, did it? Lord, Sally Jane, men are the easiest things in the world to handle when you know how."

"You don't give them half enough credit," said Sally Jane dryly. "Scratch a man and you'll catch a savage every time. Beasts!"

"Rats!" remarked Hazel, and gave her head a toss and turned her attention to practical things. "*Look* at this clean floor! *Look* at the dirt they tracked in! Oh, the devil! I could swear!"

She fetched a fresh bucket of water and began to scrub the floor anew.

"I'm going," announced Sally Jane. "Once more, Hazel, won't you change your mind and visit with us for a while?"

Hazel shook her head. "I only wish I felt able to. But you don't have to go yet. Stay to supper, do. Let the male parent get his own supper for a change. It won't hurt him. And there'll be a fine old moon to-night about eight."

"I promised Dad French bread for to-night or I would. I can't disappoint him. So long. Ride over first chance you get."

When Sally Jane was gone, Hazel hurried to finish the scrubbing of the floor. When she had wrung out the last mop rag and hung it to dry behind the stove, she fed the chickens and horses, took the ax and bucksaw, went out to the woodpile and sawed and split a man's-size jag of stove wood and kindling.

In the red glory of the sunset she returned to the house with her arms piled high with wood. She made sufficient trips to fill the woodbox, then started a fire in the stove, put on the coffeepot and ground up enough coffee for four cupfuls. She liked coffee, did Hazel Walton.

Bacon and potatoes were sputtering in their respective pans on the stove before it was so dark that she was forced to light the lamp.

She had slipped back the chimney into the clamps and was waiting for it to heat so that she could turn up the wick when the faintest of creaks made her look up.

SHE did not move, just stood there staring stupidly at the bare-headed man that blocked the open doorway. For the bare-headed man was Dan Slike, his harsh face rendered even less prepossessing than usual by a week's stubble of beard. A six-shooter was in Dan Slike's hand and the barrel was pointing at her breast.

"Don't go makin' any move toward that rifle on the hooks back of you," said Dan Slike, slipping into the room and closing the door behind him. "If you do, I'll have to beef you. I don't wanna hurt you—I ain't in the habit of hurting women, but by Gawd if it comes to me or you, why it'll just naturally have to be you. Dish up that grub a-frying there on the stove. I'm hungry. Get a move on."

At that she turned in a flash and reached for the Winchester. She had it barely off the hooks when Dan Slike was beside her. With his left hand he seized the gun barrel and shoved it upward. And as he did so he smote her across the top of the head with his pistol-barrel.

A rocketing sheaf of sparks danced before her eyes and her knees gave way. She sank to the floor in a dazed heap. He dragged the Winchester from her failing grasp as she fell.

He began to work the lever of the rifle with expert rapidity. A twinkling stream of cartridges twirled against his chest and fell to the floor. Carefully he gathered all the cartridges and dropped them into the side pocket of his coat. The unloaded rifle he leaned against the door-jamb.

Hazel slowly raised her body to a sitting position. She clung to a leg of the table for support. She passed a hand very tenderly across the top of her head. She felt a little nauseated.

Dan Slike, watching her with hard, bright eyes, strode to the stove and poured himself out a cup of coffee. He spaded in a spoonful of sugar and stirred the mixture meditatively. But he did not cease to watch her.

"You'll be all right in about ten minutes," he said calmly. "I didn't hit you so awful hard. I didn't go to. Gawd, no! I figure always to be as gentle with a woman as I can. No sense in bein' rougher than you got to be, I say."

He drank the coffee slowly, with evident enjoyment.

"Nothing like coffee when your cork's pulled," he rambled on, sloshing round the last of the coffee in the bottom of the cup. "It beats whisky, but now that I've had the coffee I don't care if I do. Got a bottle tucked away somewhere, li'l girl?"

She was still unable to speak. Her mouth had an odd cottony feeling. She shook her head in reply to his question.

"Is that so?" he said in the chatty tone he had been using. "I guess maybe you're mistaken."

He set the cup down on the table, reached down and twisted his fingers into her hair. With a yank that brought the tears springing to her eyes, he said:

"About that bottle now—ain't you a mite mistaken? What's the matter? Cat got your tongue?"

Again he pulled her hair, pulled it till the tears ran down her cheeks and she moaned and cried in purest agony.

"C'mon!" directed Dan Slike. "Quit your bluffin', you triflin' hussy! You ain't hurt a-tall. And I can't stay here all night while you sit on the floor and beller. Stand up on your two legs and bring me that bottle. And no monkey business either. Say, have you got a six-shooter? Answer me, have you?"

"No! No! I haven't! I haven't another gun." She told him this lie in such a heartbreaking tone that he was constrained to believe her.

"I'll have to take your word for it," he grumbled. "But you remember, girl, the first false move you make with a knife or anything else I'll blow you apart. Damn you, get up!"

With which he gave her hair such a terrific twist that the exquisite pain expelled all her initial fear of him and she leaped at him like a wildcat, her nails curving at his eyes.

Dan Slike dodged backward, set himself and swung his right fist without mercy. He was no boxer. The accurate placing of blows was beyond him. So it was that the swing intended for her jaw landed on her cheekbone, a much less vulnerable spot. Nevertheless the smash was enough to send her spinning sidewise over a chair and pile her sicker and dizzier than before in a corner of the room.

She lay still and panted.

"You see how it is," he pointed out. "You ain't gainin' a thing by fighting me. Might as well be sensible first as last. But lemme tell you if you keep on afussin' at me thisaway, I'll sure have to be rough with you."

He sat down on the edge of the table and rolled a cigarette. Lighting it he drew in a slow luxurious lungful.

"One thing I gotta say for your sheriff," he observed behind a barrier of smoke, "he gimme plenty of tobacco while I was his guest. I can't say but he took right good care of me—for a sheriff."

His incarceration having deprived Dan Slike of conversational opportunities he was now experiencing the natural reaction. He was talking too much.

"Fed me well too," he resumed. "Oh, I ain't complainin'. I— Hell, your grub's beginnin' to burn. I'll just move those frypans back. Feelin' any better, girl?

He came and stood over her, hands on hips, and looked down at her grimly. She shrank away, her wide eyes fixed upon him in fright and loathing.

It was evident that he found his survey of her satisfactory, for he kicked her in the side. Not hard. Simply as an earnest of what lay in store for her in case she chose to continue contumacious. "Get up," he commanded.

The nausea and most of the dizzy feeling had evaporated. She was perfectly able to get up, but it was intolerable that she should do the bidding of her uncle's murderer. She continued to lie still.

"Get up!" he repeated, and kicked her again—harder.

She got up, gasping, a hand at her side. She felt as though one of her ribs was broken. His long fingers fastened on the tender flesh of her shoulder. He shoved her across the room. She brought up against the stove. Instinctively she thrust out a hand to save herself. Her bare palm smacked down upon the hottest stove lid.

She sprang back with a choked cry and clapped the burned hand to her mouth. Dan Slike laughed merrily—for him. "Serve you right. You're too damn pernickety anyway. Aw, whatcha blubberin' about, crybaby? Dontcha know enough to put some bakin' soda on the burn and tie a rag round it? Ain't you got any brains a-tall? Pick up that kettle! Just pick it up!"

Her unburned hand fell away from the kettle. She had seen the sixshooter flash out at his last words. She knew now that this man meant what he said. He would kill her, even as he had killed her uncle.

With a shudder that began at her knees and ended at the nape of her neck she went to the cupboard and took out a carton of baking-soda.

"Here," he said roughly, when he saw that she was making a poor job at bandaging, "here, you can't tie that one-handed. Lemme."

He bandaged the hand, made fast the bandage with a too-tight knot. He obviously lingered over the business, deriving pleasure from her state of terror.

It has been shown that Hazel was not lacking in courage. Indeed she had more than the average woman's share of it. But this man staggered her mentally. She did not know what he would do next and was in a panic accordingly.

"Scared stiff," he remarked as he twirled her about and headed her toward the stove. "You don't like me a-tall, do you? Nemmine. Lessee how your grub tastes."

She had set the table for herself before he came in. He sat down at her place, his eyes bright upon her. Fumblingly she filled a plate with bacon and fried potatoes. She brought him another cup of coffee, and placed the condensed milk and the sugar within his reach.

"Spoon," he said shortly.

She took the one from the cup he had

just drunk from and handed it to him. He caught her wrist. The spoon fell with a clatter.

"You're so scared of me, you can't hardly breathe," he said calmly. "I don't like li'l girls to be scared of me, so you can just get you another plate and cup and saucer and sit down there on the other side of the table and eat your supper with me."

To eat supper with her uncle's murderer! Here was a grotesque jape of fate. It was unthinkable. Absolutely. The man divined something of what was passing in her mind.

"All in the line of business, li'l girl," he said with a backward jerk of his head toward the front room where he had killed her uncle. "I didn't have a thing against him—personally."

"There were dishes here on the table," she babbled hysterically. "They found them here after—after—showing how he'd fed you first, and——"

"Sure he fed me," he interrupted. "I was hungry, hungrier than I am now. Alla same you gotta eat supper with me. I want you to and I always get what I want."

He twisted her wrist to emphasize his wish. She uttered a little moan. "Don't! Oh, don't hurt me any more! I'll do what you want."

Beaten, body and soul, she went to the cupboard and got herself plate and cup and saucer, knife and fork and spoon. Her six-shooter was in the next room, hanging in a holster on the wall. A loaded shotgun stood at the head of her bed. But it is doubtful that even if the weapon had been within short reach she would have dared attempt to use either. Dan Slike had scared her too much.

She sat down opposite the man and tried to eat. It required every atom of will power to induce her throat muscles to permit her to swallow. Dan Slike watched her with savage satisfaction. He found the situation intensely amusing. To murder her uncle and later eat a meal with the niece. What a joke!

"I haven't forgotten about that bottle," he remarked suddenly, pushing back his chair. "You thought it had slipped my mind, I guess, didn't you? I always have a drink after meals or my victuals don't set good."

Without a word she went to the cupboard and brought back a bottle of whisky. He took it from her and held it up against the lamplight.

"This is only half full," he said severely. "You got another round somewhere?"

It was fright and not the lie that made her stammer. "Nun-no."

Oddly enough he saw fit to believe her. Perhaps it was because he had just eaten and was at bodily ease with the world. She stood before him, arms limp, eyes on the floor. He drew the cork from the bottle and took a long pull.

"Good whisky," he vouchsafed between the third and fourth drags. "I'll take what's left with me—if you don't mind."

He was going then! Her poor terrified heart beat with a trifle more spirit. She looked up. Their eyes met.

"Don't look so happy!" he snarled. "Maybe I'll take you with me!"

He eyed her discomfiture with a sinister look. He uttered a short bark of a laugh. "Dontcha fret. I ain't got time to fuss with any female. Not that I would even if I had time, so don't go flatterin' yourself any. Women ain't in my line. You're all a squalling bunch of Gawd's mistakes, every last one of you, and you can stick a pin in that. Women? Phutt!"

So saying Dan Slike turned his head slightly and spat accurately through the open draft into the stove. An engaging gentleman, Mr. Slike!

"I saw two mules and a horse in the corral when I came by," he resumed, dandling the whisky bottle on his knee. "Looks like a good horse—better than the one I left up in the timber. I'll ride your horse and lead the other. Where do you keep your saddle and bridle? In the shed, huh? Aw right, you can show me when we go out. Listen. I expect to-morrow some time you'll have a few gents a-callin' on you. Yeah, tomorrow. It'll likely take those Golden Bar citizens about till then to pick up my trail.

"You needn't to look too hopeful. Those jiggers don't know they're alive. I saw 'em scatterin' off hell-bent the wrong way before I ever started this way, you bet. Why, hell's bells, I even topped a horse behind a corral with the woman right in the house gettin' supper and she never knowed it. Tell you, girl, I'm slick. And if I didn't have more sense in the tip of my finger than all those fellers and their li'l tin sheriff and his li'l tin deputies I'd be a heap ashamed of myself. Say—about that sheriff; I heard folks talkin' in the street this afternoon and they said the sheriff had skedaddled because he'd murdered a sport named O'Gorman. A fi-ine sheriff he is, to slop around turnin' tricks like that. A fi-ine sheriff, and you can tell him I said so."

He drove in the cork with the heel of his hand and slipped the bottle into a side pocket of his coat. Standing up, he tapped her smartly on the shoulder. "Get me that hat over there on the hook. I left town in such a hurry I clean forgot to fetch mine along." •

Silently she brought the hat.

"Why do you women always wear hats too big for you?" he grumbled, after trying it on. "I couldn't keep this thing on my head."

She had brought an Omaha newspaper from town that day. It lay outspread on the table. He tore off a half page, plaited it neatly and stuffed the thickened strip in behind the sweatband of the hat.

"It will fit me now," he said briskly, pulling on the hat. "Gimme those cantenas and saddle-pockets hanging on the wall."

She obeyed stumblingly. Into the cantenas, from her store of provisions, he packed bacon, coffee, a sack of flour a third full, a tin can full of salt, another can filled with matches, a salt pack full of sugar, several cans of tomatoes and peaches, a frying-pan and a small can of lard. In the saddle-pockets he stowed away the twelve boxes of rifle cartridges, the six boxes of revolver cartridges and a knife, fork and spoon. The long-bladed butcher-knife he nonchalantly slipped down his boot leg.

"I'll tie the coffee-pot on the saddle," he said, buckling the billet of a cantena flap. "It's too wet to go in here. Can't take a chance on spoiling my flour. C'mon, le's go find the saddle."

"YOU see," said Dan Slike, as he topped his mount, "I ain't really been hard on you. I didn't ask you for a nickel. I only took what I needed. And if you hadn't fought me like you did I wouldn't have laid a finger on you. Think of that and be happy."

He whirled the horse and rode away toward the lower ground behind the house, the coffee-pot clacking rhythmically against the barrel of the Winchester Hazel had vainly hoped he would forget to take with him.

Hazel remained standing beside the corral gate. Suddenly she was conscious of a great weariness. She was as one who has traveled a day's journey without food. Her arms and legs were leaden. Her head ached, her body ached, her spirit ached.

With dragging steps she returned to the house. From the cupboard she brought forth the bottle of whisky she had lied to save and poured a stiff four fingers into a teacup. She drank off the liquor in three gulps. But she was so spent that, other than a fit of coughing, there was no effect.

The lamp was burning low and fitfully, filling the kitchen with a smell of burning wicking. She had forgotten to refill it that morning. She put away the whisky bottle, turned out the lamp and filled it by the faint light from an opened draft-chink. But in reaching for the chimney she knocked it to the floor and broke it.

Apathetically, every movement mechanical, she found another chimney and adjusted it in the clamps. A smell of burned hair suddenly filled her nostrils. A lock of hair had fallen aginst the lamp chimney. She put her hand to her head. Her hair was in a slovenly tangle over one ear. She did it up any way and skewered it fast with a few pins.

Crunch! The remains of the lamp chimney crackled under foot. She brought out the dust pan and brushed and swept up the pieces. She carried the broken glass out to the trash pile. When she returned to the kitchen there was a man standing in the middle of the room.

Nothing had the power to surprise her now. She would not have been amazed had the devil himself popped into the room. The man turned at her entry. He was Rafe Tuckleton. He glowered down at her. She shut the door and put away the dust-pan and brush behind the wood-box.

"What do you want?" she asked lifelessly.

"Who's been here?" he demanded, pointing an accusing finger at the table. "Two plates, two cups, two saucers—who you been entertaining?"

Entertaining! Good Lord! Hazel sat down on the wood-box and laughed hysterically.

He was around the table and confronting her in three strides. "Who's been here?" he kept at her.

"Dan Slike," she said with a spasmodic giggle.

"You're a liar," he told her promptly. "Dan Slike didn't come this way. He—he went another way. There's a posse on his trail now. You've had Bill Wingo here, that's whatsa matter."

"I haven't," she denied, wagging her head at him. "Dan Slike was here, I tell you."

"The hell he was. You must think I'm a fool. Bill Wingo's been here, I tell you. Think I don't know, huh, you deceivin' hussy! Trying to make small of me, carryin' on with other men, huh?"

She said nothing. It is doubtful if she heard him, for all his roaring voice and gesturing fists. Billy Wingo! *Her* Billy—once. He had loved her too—once. What a queer, queer world it was. Everybody and everything at cross-purposes. Yet there was a reason for it all. Must be. Even a reason for Rafe. She looked up at Rafe. He was glaring down at her with a most villainous expression on his lean features.

"How long has Bill Wingo been gone?" he demanded.

"It wasn't Bill," she insisted doggedly. "It was Dan Slike and he's been gone maybe half an hour."

"Say, whatsa use of lyin' to me? You're an odd number, by all accounts, but you aint so odd you could sit here and eat and drink and carry on with your uncle's murderer. You can't tell me *that.*"

She was regarding him with curious eyes. "I thought you always said Dan Slike didn't kill my uncle?"

"Well—uh—you see, everybody else seems to think he did. And—ah—maybe I was wrong. Anyway, say I was. For all I know to the contrary he did kill your uncle. What's fairer than that, I'd like to know? You think he killed Tom Walton, don't you?"

She continued to stare at Rafe. "I know he did."

"Then how do you expect me to believe you ate supper with him? You're foolish. You had Bill Wingo here and we'll settle this Bill Wingo business right now. You see, don't you, how you can never marry the feller? This Tip O'Gorman murder has queered him round here for keeps. Sooner or later he'll hang for it. You'd look fine, wouldn't you, the widow of a——"

"Don't say it," she cut him short. "Billy Wingo is no murderer. He fights fair, which is more than I can say for you. However, you can set your mind at rest. I'm not likely to marry Billy Wingo, or anybody else."

"Then what do you care whether I call him a murderer or not if you don't love him?" he probed. "I thought a while back you had taken my advice and busted it off with Bill, but now after hearin' what you tried to do to Nate Samson, and all that ammunition and grub you bought the other day after Tip was killed, why I began to think maybe you was startin' in to play the Jack again. I told you last fall I was gonna have you myself. You ain't forgot it, have you?"

His eyes, savage and mean, held hers steadily. "I come over here to-night to get you. I'm taking you back with me to-night to my ranch. To-morrow you can marry me or not. It'll be just as you say."

"You're taking *me* to your ranch!" she gasped. "*Me?*"

He nodded. "You, nobody else."

She laughed harshly without a note of hysteria. "You're two hundred years behind the times. Men don't carry off their women any more."

"Here's one that will," he told her. "You're going with me, y'understand. And you needn't stop to wash your face or change into petticoats either. I'm not letting you out of my sight. If you wanna take any extra duds along, you can wrap 'em up. What's the answer—you going willing or will I have to tie you up in a bundle?"

"You idiot, even your friends wouldn't stand you turning such a trick as this! I'll bet you couldn't get your own men to help you. That's why you had to come alone."

His suddenly bloating features gave evidence that her shot had told. Bending down, he shook her shoulder roughly. And now for the first time she smelt his breath. It was rank with the raw odor of whisky. So that was what had given him the wild idea of carrying her off by force. The man was plastered. Sober, he was bad enough. Drunk, he was capable of anything.

She reached stoveward for the lid lifter. Rafe seized her wrist and jerked her sidewise.

"None of that!" he snarled. "Gonna get your clothes or not?"

"I'll get them," she said calmly. "Let go of my wrist."

If she could win into the next room where the sixshooter was hanging on the wall it might be possible to — But he did not release her wrist.

"I'll go with you," he told her with a leer. "You're too slippery a customer to trust alone."

As he turned with her the lamplight fell full on his face and she saw that his eyes were bloodshot. He also saw something that had hitherto escaped his notice. He saw the whisky bottle on the shelf in the cupboard. She had neglected to close the cupboard door.

"I'll have a short drink first," he said, and dragged her to the cupboard.

He was holding her left-handed. She was on the wrong side to reach his gun. Nevertheless she swung her body in front of him and snatched wildly at the pistol butt.

He did not divine her intention but thought she was trying to keep him away from the whisky. The result was the same for he wrenched her back with a twist that started the tears in her eyes.

Holding the bottle in one hand he drew the cork with his teeth, spat it out and applied his lips to the bottle neck. He swallowed long and generously. Hazel saw his Adam's apple slide up and down a dozen times. At such a rate the man would be a fiend in no time.

"Let me get my clothes," she begged.

Anything to get him away from the liquor. But Rafe was not so easily separated from his old friend.

"Wait a minute," he said peevishly, lowering the bottle and fixing her with his bloodshot gaze. "Don't be in such a hurry. Here, have one yourself."

He thrust the bottle toward her. She took it from him, held it to her mouth and then the bottle seemed to slip from her fingers. She snatched at it, juggled it a split second and—the bottle smashed in bits on a corner of the stove.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" she cried, quite as if she had not contrived the catastrophe on purpose.

"I'll make you sorrier!" Rafe exclaimed and without more ado cast both arms around her.

He was striving to kiss her and she, face crushed against his rough shirt, fought him like the primeval female every woman becomes in like circumstances. Her right hand clawed upward at his face. Her left arm, doubled between their two bodies, she strove to work free so that she could grab his gun.

Rafe received three distinct clawings that considerably altered the appearance of one side of his face before he was able to confine those active fingers.

"Here!" he bawled in a fury. "I'll fix you!"

He tried to seize her by the throat and his thumb slipped by mistake into her mouth. She promptly clamped down hard on the thumb. With a yell, Rafe released his grip on her body and worked a thumb and ring finger into her cheeks in a frantic effort to force open her locked jaws.

Suddenly she opened her mouth. Rafe sprang back a yard, shaking a bleeding thumb and swearing, and as he sprang she dragged the six-shooter from his holster.

Her palm swept down to cock the gun. But Rafe was as quick to see his danger as Dan Slike had been. He made a long arm as he hurled himself at her and knocked the barrel to one side at the moment of the shot. Before she could fire again he had torn the weapon from her grasp and flung it across the room.

"You tried to murder me!" he panted. "You tried to murder me!"

She dived headlong beneath his arm but he caught the slack of her overalls as she went by and dragged her to a standstill. She immediately butted him in the stomach with her head. He stumbled back but caught her arm. Her head flashed down and her teeth fastened on his wrist. Again he broke the grip of her teeth by the application of ring finger and thumb to her cheeks and then he reached purposefully for her throat and began to strangle her in dead earnest.

She kicked and thrashed about like a wild thing in a trap—as indeed she was. Her nails scratched desperately at his arms. She might as well have been petting him. Tighter and tighter became the choking grasp of those long fingers. She could not breathe. Her temples were bursting. Her head felt like a balloon. With her last flare-up of failing strength she kicked him on the knee-cap.

He jumped back against the wall, dragging her with him, and began to shake her as a dog does a rat. And then the old Terry clock did that for which it surely must have been originally made. For, as his shoulders struck the wall his head knocked away the support of the bracket that held the clock. Involuntarily he ducked his head. It was the worst thing he could have done, giving, as it did, the clock an extra foot to fall. It fell. One corner struck him fairly on the temple and knocked him cold as a wedge.

When Hazel's reeling senses had reestablished their equilibrium she found herself on the floor lying across the inert legs of Rafe Tuckleton. She raised herself on her two arms and looked at him. He was breathing very lightly. It occurred to her that it would not worry her overmuch if he breathed not at all.

She dragged herself on hands and knees to where he had thrown his six-shooter. Then she pulled herself up into a chair at the table and leaning across the cloth trained the six-shooter on Rafe's stomach.

And as she sat there watching a senseless man through the gun-sights it suddenly seemed to her that she was not one person but two, herself and a stranger. And the Hazel Walton that had gone through the evening's adventures was the stranger. She herself apparently stood at one side observing. But she saw the room and its contents with new eyes, the eyes of the stranger. It was a most amazing feeling, and she was oddly frightened while it lasted.

Slowly the feeling passed as her muscles renewed their strength and her jangled nerves steadied and quieted. She came back to herself with a jerk as Rafe Tuckleton stirred and put his hand to his head. She saw the hand come away covered with blood. That side of Rafe's head being in the shadow she had not previously noted that it had sustained a shrewd cut.

Rafe groaned a little. He rolled over and sat up, his chin sagging forward on his chest. He moved his head and looked at her vacantly. The blood ran down his cheek and dripped slowly off his chin.

The light of reason glared of a sudden in Rafe's eyes. She could see that he was absorbing the situation from every angle.

"I'll give you five minutes to pull yourself together and get out," she announced clearly. "If you're still here by the time I've counted three hundred I'll begin to shoot."

Rafe started to go by the time she reached sixty. With the six-shooter pointing at the small of his back, her finger on the trigger, step by step she drove him out of the house to where he had left his horse.

Hazel watched him ride away and after a little become at one with the moonlit landscape. She walked back to the house. She felt that she was taking enormous strides. In reality she was stepping short and staggering badly. She went into the kitchen. She closed the door, dropped the bar into place and fell into the nearest chair.

"My God!" she said aloud, "I wonder what will happen next?"

*How did the sheriff clear himself and Hazel of the serious charges against them? "The Rider of Golden Bar" will be continued in the October number, out September 15*

Who is Dr. Goodrich?

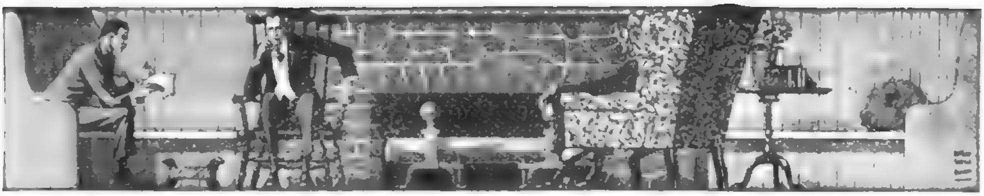
**He will arrive soon and in order quickly to establish a pleasant acquaintance with a worth-while person you must know something about him.**

*See October* EVERYBODY'S

"Twenty-Four Hours" *A Complete Novel* By Belldon Duff

**Put a princess in the hands of desperate cutthroat politicians who are gambling with a throne as the stake, stage the action in New York and much can happen in twice around the clock. It has been a long time since a more swiftly moving mystery story appeared.**

*October* EVERYBODY'S *Out September 15*



# Everybody's Chimney Corner

*Where Reader, Author and Editor*
*Gather to Talk Things Over*

EVERYBODY'S desires to thank its readers for their comments on the July issue which was the first number in the new size, and carrying out the new all-fiction policy. Even the criticism was friendly, delightfully so. Our most severe critic ended his letter by saying, "I presume I shall go right along reading Everybody's. Good luck to you—I am not always knocking." Every critic but one is pleased with the new form and all but one praise the contents; two want articles in the magazine.

A reader from Illinois wants us to "go down to Springfield and get facts (not fancies) about a man named Len Small who poses as Illinois' governor." A Maine reader asks "can not we have one article each month dealing with the thing which is most vitally important to the most people?" We wish we could comply with both requests, but we think that we can prove that it would not be wise to try to do so.

AS WE announced in the July issue, we are trying to publish a magazine with a universal appeal and in trying to find the universal appeal, we hit upon fiction. Good fiction is universal. The average article is not. For example, would the Maine reader be interested in an article attacking the governor of Illinois? He might be interested in an article attacking the governor of Maine, provided he disagrees with him. And how should we go about carrying out the suggestion of the Maine reader? Could we ever feel sure that we had found "the thing most vitally important to the most people?" What is important in Maine might not be so important in Illinois, California or Texas.

If we were in a position to cover the whole range of progress we might hit the mark. But since we can not do this adequately, and publish a fiction magazine at the same time, we had best leave the job to the periodicals that specialize in this type of contents. The Illinois request is a good suggestion for one of the great newspapers of that state. They specialize in handling politicians. This is an age of specialization.

SINCE Everybody's intends to be successful—and big success means that it must have a large circulation—it is necessary that it have a universal appeal. Books, to cite one case, like "Eben Holden," by Irving Bacheller, which has sold close on to one million copies, are examples of universal appeal. "Eben Holden" is a novel—fiction—and it is to fiction that Everybody's pins its hopes. Incidentally, we hope soon to begin publication of a new novel by Mr. Bacheller. We're going to try always to pick the writers with the universal appeal.

Nearly all who have written have praised "The Rider of Golden Bar," by William Patterson White. And unless plans fall through, it won't be long before we shall have another novel by him. One reader writes:

"Your Everybody's for July has set a mighty fine pace for other periodicals likeminded. Fiction is all right, and we need the kind you give us—plenty of backbone and plenty of action—at the same time good, clean stuff that one need not be ashamed of reading."

The foregoing expresses what we are trying to do—give you good stories—wholesome entertainment—adventure stories, love-stories, detective stories, stories of the outdoors, sea stories—all types of clean, stirring fiction.

And we hope that readers, who suggest that we depart from our sphere to publish articles, will consider the problem seriously. Would they rather have an all-fiction magazine reasonably sure to please all of its readers all of the time or a mixture—fiction and articles—which could do no more than hope to please all of its readers some of the time?

ANOTHER of our critics dislikes the new size, new covers and the new illustrations, but is a good-enough sportsman to promise to give us a further trial. This prompts us to say something more about our physical appearance. There were several reasons for adopting the new size. In this new form we can give the reader more for his money in quantity and quality of reading matter. In addition, it is a size more convenient for the reader to handle.

To explain further this and other economies that have been put into effect in the new EVERYBODY'S, it is necessary to go back a number of years. It has been a long while since a popular magazine was produced upon what a manufacturer would call a sound basis. The manufacturer produces a product which he sells to the consumer at a profit. In most cases the publisher has produced a magazine which he sold to the consumer at a loss. He relied upon advertisement revenue for his profit, even for a part of his costs, and when advertisement revenue shrank, because of general depression or other reason, his magazine ceased to be self-sustaining. In the last few years the point has been reached where some publishers have taken circulation at a loss, in order to try to "sell" it to the advertiser. To-day these publishers have this circulation but they haven't been able to sell it to the advertiser; for it is low tide in the advertising world.

FOR some time it has been felt by many that there must be an evolution in magazine publishing. EVERYBODY'S feels that this is true and it is the first of the popular magazines to break ground in what appears to it to be a sounder, more enduring field.

EVERYBODY'S is being built so that it can live without being disturbed by fluctuations in advertisement revenue.

We don't want circulation that is obtained at a loss. We want people to buy the magazine because they are interested in it—because they can't do without it.

To-day many magazines with their advertisement pages shrinking, are cutting down on quantity and quality of contents. This while EVERYBODY'S is giving more in quantity and quality of entertainment than it ever gave. If we succeed in our primary purpose of making the book a necessity to readers, it will also be a necessity to advertisers, and that problem will be rightly solved.

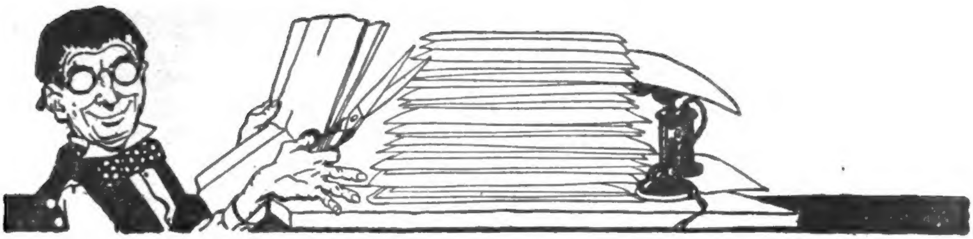
And if reports of the sales of the July number mean anything, we shall have the circulation. Here is a straw: In one district—Boston—there was sold in the first week alone seventy-five per cent. of the total sales of the nearest previous issue for which figures are available.

All of which we hope will give the reader a clearer understanding of the reasons for EVERYBODY'S change in form and its new all-fiction policy.

HOW many persons of the name of Popplewell are there in the United States? It was used by Wyndam Martyn in a story called "Samuel Perkins, Unable Mariner," in April EVERYBODY'S, and a reader of that name writes:

> You will note my name and that with that name Mr. Martyn begins the story. What I should like to know is whether Popplewell is a real name, or fictitious. I was born in London, and came to the good old U. S. A. in 1895, and in the long years I have lived here I have never heard of any one of my name, Popplewell. So you can imagine my surprise when I opened my April EVERYBODY'S and saw Mr. Martyn's story. I should indeed be very glad to know the Mr. Popplewell in the story. if the gentleman is so disposed and is in body and good health. I am all alone now that my brother has died and so always thought I was the only person with that name in the U. S. A. If Mr. Martyn's character is real, please let me know his address and any information you can give about him.

The writer's name is G. M. Popplewell and his address is general delivery, Montpelier, Vermont. Will the Popplewells please write? SEWELL HAGGARD.



# Prose or Worse *by* Gridley Adams

### DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

On Chicago Avenue, Chicago: "*A Neiss—Tailor.*"

In Chicago Tribune: "*Music and Dramatic Teachers. If you wish to make splendid money in your spare time act quick. Address HK 59, Tribune.*" (*That's the trouble with most of them now—their acting is* too *quick.*)

Advertisement in Waterloo, Iowa, *Times: "Women to press."* (*Spring is near.*)

(*Toronto Star*)

A Don't-Be-Dirty shower and Hard-Times party was recently given for an April bride, when everything that could be thought of in the way of cleansers was given the bride-to-be.

**Sounds like the inspiration of a catty rival.**

---

(*Cedar Rapids Gazette*)

LOST—Saturday night from an automobile between Olin and Cedar Rapids black bag containing silk nightgown, silk shirt, silk stockings, and three dozen eggs.

**The chickens were probably on their way home to roost.**

---

(*Milford, Illinois, Herald*)

The afternoon was spent in initiating the bride and other games of amusement, after which light refreshments were served.

**Adding a new hazard to the perils of matrimony.**

---

(*Dubuque Times-Journal*)

Miss Elizabeth Lantry was her sister's only attendant. She was gowned in pink Killarney roses.

**I should have thought she *would* have kept every one else out.**

---

(*Newspaper headline*)

Dog Claws Woman On Roof.

**Some ratter.**

---

(*Pendleton, Ore., East Oregonian*)

WANTED—Middle-aged lady as housekeeper—must be meek and reliable—St. Elmo Hotel.

**Only a few of 'em left.**

(*Hornell, N. Y., Evening Times*)

Wedding Guests Drop to Cellar.

**Doesn't take long nowadays to accept an invitation.**

---

(*Bloomington, Illinois, Pantagraph*)

The Christian church was the scene of a pretty wedding Tuesday when Ralph Hinsdale Goodale of Angola, Ind., and Miss Hazel Naomi Litchfield of Flanagan exchanged cows that made them husband and wife.

**Animal husbandry, so to speak.**

---

(*Byers, Oklahoma, Enterprise*)

While strolling down love's silvery river, as they gathered the sunbeams from the lilacs and daffodils, and the melody of love's sweet song filled their every dreams; they saw the vision of eternal bliss and united in the holy bonds of matrimony—they are married now.

**Oh, splash!**

---

(*Ad. of Chicago theatre*)

Clean, wholesome, full of pathos, of humor, of love and action; a play for young and old. Positively no children admitted.

**Probably by the author of that other charming screen drama "Why Kidneys Float Away."**

---

(*Bridgeport, Illinois, Leader*)

A lady by the name of Mrs. Beenbolt while out sleigh-riding last Sunday met with an accident about a mile southwest of here when the horses ran away, throwing her out and breaking a leg, and cutting and bruising her otherwise.

**Her otherwise will never be the same again.**

*Copyright, 1921, by Gridley Adams.*

*(Newark, N. J., Star-Eagle)*

WANTED—Steamfitters on ladies' and gents' garments. 700 Franklin St., Elizabeth.

**The kind you can take home and work on evenings.**

---

*(Toronto, Canada, Daily Star)*

GENTLEMAN, forty-seven wishes to meet with lady or widow, view matrimony. Box 812 Star.

**After forty one is less particular, isn't one?**

---

*(Sioux City Journal)*

Pair trousers lost, West Hotel dining-room, Thursday. Phone Auto 1522. Reward.

**And in the meantime?**

---

*(Providence, R. I., Evening Bulletin)*

The bride was attired in a bridal gown of white satin, trimmed with ice.

**No wonder some of them get cold feet.**

---

*(New York World)*

Whisky Vanishes under the noses of U. S. Guardians.

**Auld Lang Syne.**

---

*(Oak Park, Illinois, Oak Leaves)*

Furnished house; all or part; shady neighborhood; some rooms now ready.

**S-sh, or the police may get on to it.**

---

*(Greenwich, Conn., News and Graphic)*

FOR RENT—A house of eight rooms and two baths on the trolley track.

**See America first.**

---

*(From the novel "Forgotten Love")*

Struck dumb with amazement, she shrieked again and again.

**Scissors!**

---

*(Hornell, N. Y., Evening Tribune)*

The vital statistics for the town of Erwin, which includes the village of Painted Post, for September, follow: No births, one death; two marriage licenses and one hundred hunting licenses.

**No time for checkers and other indoor sports.**

---

*(Sioux Falls Argus-Leader)*

Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Markerson departed over the Milwaukee for Hot Springs, Arkansas, where they expect to spend the next six weeks taking the baths and drinking the water.

**Which proves where some peoples' tastes are.**

---

*(San Francisco Bulletin)*

In the early days the Indians of North America had very poor facilities for traveling. Until horses were introduced by the Spaniards all their navigation had to be done on foot.

**That's when the country was wet.**

---

*(Colorado Springs Gazette)*

LOST—Gray cloth pocketbook, three thousand dollars in change. Gazette. Reward.

**Sure, keep the change.**

---

*(Ogdensburg, N. Y., Daily News)*

WANTED—Two girls in our stripping department. Good wages.

**That's all right: they are cigar manufacturers.**

---

*(Rockford, Illinois, Star)*

Harry Sackett is entertaining Thomas D. Gall from the Bitter Root Valley for a few days.

**Try a little of mother's best wormwood salad before you go.**

---

*(Greenville, S. C., Daily News)*

Ivey Robinson was instantly killed on Main Street this morning during the storm here last night.

**Where midnight lingers in the lap of dawn.**

---

*(New London, Conn., Day)*

Miss Anna Morley is unable to attend to her duties at the telephone exchange due to trouble with her feet.

**Well, please return my nickel.**

---

*(Chicago Tribune)*

LOST—On 48th or Lake Street car, lady's pocketbook with workingman's salary, $15; reward.

***Cherchez* la femme.**

---

*(Omaha Bee)*

American Goalash Parlor—The place to eat. 1313 Ave. D.

**Goulashes? Why, I thought that was a shoe store.**

---

*(Adv. in Chicago Tribune)*

What should you look for in a reed baby carriage?

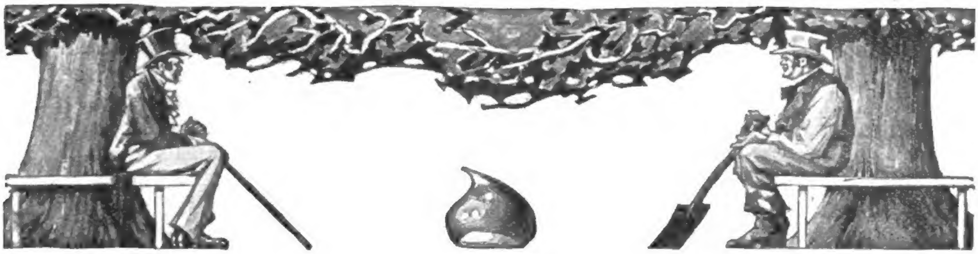
**Usually laundry, nowadays.**

---

*(Charleston, Miss., Tallahatchie Herald)*

"Greek L. Rise was unanimously elected to represent Tallahatchie county in the House while he was away serving his country in khaki. An unusual honor, and shared perhaps by no other member."

**We love him for the absence he has made.**



# Everybody's Chestnut Tree

*Editor's Note: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped, addressed envelope.*

**MANY** years ago during the great oil boom at Beaumont, Texas, Governor Hogg, who had then retired from office, was engaged in the oil business at Beaumont and was a regular guest at the best hotel in town. The governor was so liberal with his tips that George, the negro waiter who officiated at the governor's table, considered him a valuable asset. One morning when the governor sat down for breakfast he observed that a new negro was at his table. "What are you doing here?" said the governor. "Where's George?"

"Gawge won't be at dis table no moah, Guvner." "Why?" "You see it's dis er way, Guvner: Me and Gawge 'gaged in a crap-shooting game las' night; de bones wuz powerful good to me; I win all Gawge's money, den I win his razer, den his rabbit-foot—and den I win you."

**AT** CRICCIETH, in Wales, an American tourist was accosted by the porter who drew his attention to a man standing some distance off. "You see that man there? That's the great David Lloyd George." The American grunted. After a short interval the porter, who was evidently deeply impressed by the importance of the distinguished native, again called attention to him, and again the tourist grunted. A few minutes later the porter reappeared with the same message, whereupon the Yankee lost patience and said, "Well I guess he ain't the Lord Almighty is he?"

"Mebby not," said the porter. "But he's a young man yet."

**A** TWO-FOOT rule was given to a laborer in a Clyde boat-yard to measure an iron plate. The laborer not being well up in the use of the rule, after spending considerable time returned.

"Now, Mick," asked the plater, "what size is the plate?"

"Well," replied Mick, with a grin of satisfaction, "it's the length of your rule and two thumbs over, with this piece of brick and the breadth of my hand and my arm from here to there, bar a finger."

**A** COLORED man knocked at the back door and asked for a job.

"What is your name?" asked the lady of the house.

"Ma name's Poe, ma'am," he answered.

"Poe, eh?" she said. "I suppose some of your family worked for Edgar Allan Poe."

The colored man's eyes bulged and he struck himself a resounding whack on the chest. "Why, ma'am," he said, "Ah is Edgar Allan Poe."

**FREDDY'S** mother was in the hospital, and the day following the interesting event Freddy was taken to see his new sister. After the introduction he wandered into an adjoining room whose woman occupant was recovering from a broken ankle.

"Hello," he said, as she smiled a welcome to him, "how long you been here?"

"About six weeks," she replied.

"Gee, you're slow," he blurted out. "My mother got her baby the second day she came."

THE leading man of the company billed to play "Romeo and Juliet" at the opera-house that night—one evening only—approached the manager.

"Say," the actor declared, "I've got to have ten cents."

"Ten cents!" exclaimed the other in startled accents. "I never saw such a fellow—always howling for money! What you want ten cents for in a town like this?"

"I want it for a shave," the actor explained. "You can't expect me to play *Romeo* with a three-days' growth of black beard on my face, can you?"

"No, I suppose not," the other reluctantly admitted, and slowly put his hand into his pocket. Then a happy smile broke over his face, and the hand was withdrawn empty.

"That's all right," he declared cheerfully. "We'll just change the bill to 'Othello!' "

A YOUTH in a small country town decided to go to the city to make his fortune, but before leaving he was warned by all the well-meaning friends and neighbors to look out that the city people did not "josh" him.

He arrived in the city and took a position in a grocery store. Of course he was suspicious of every one that came in, and when a very neat-looking young lady came in and asked for some bird-seed the youth replied smartly, "You can't josh me, ma'am. I know a thing or two. Birds don't come from seeds, they come from eggs."

IT IS related that the compiler of one of our well-known dictionaries was one day discovered by his wife indulging in unbecoming familiarity with the maid.

"Sir, I am surprised," she said in a disgusted tone of voice.

"Madam, your English is incorrect," he retorted. "On the contrary, you are astonished—I am surprised."

MR. LEVY came home one day and found his wife in the act of giving their son three quarters. "Mommer, mommer," he cried excitedly. "You should give it three quarters to the baby! Such extravagance will ruin me!"

"No, popper," said his wife soothingly. "It pleases him. I let him put them in the gas meter. He thinks it's a bank."

AN OLD colored mammy whose husban had just successfully sued for divorce can slowly down the court-house steps, talkin to herself: "Dar ain't no justice in dis hea wo'ld. Dat useless ol' husband of mine, h got his divorce, he got de house, got d money, got mah free chil'en and dey ain none of 'em his'n."

AN EXECUTIVE in a large shipyard had a reputation for efficiency that filled his men with terror. He particularly hated to see two men doing a job that could be done just as well by one alone. One morning one of the men came to work and related the following dream:

It seemed that the executive in question had died, and men from the plant were selected as pall-bearers. While carrying the coffin out of his residence the lid flew back and the corpse sat up. Pointing to two of the pall-bearers, he said: "Here, you loafers, there are too many men on this job. You two knock off."

"THIS is my car," exploded the indignant tourist to the garageman, "and what I say about it goes—see?"

A dirty-faced machinist crawled out from under the dead machine and, looking at the irate man for a moment, said pleadingly, "For Gawd's sake, say 'engine,' Mister!"

THE minister was a bishop's son, a bachelor, and somewhat fastidious. One evening a stout colored man and his equally stout lady presented themselves for marriage. The ceremony over, the groom turned to kiss his bride, but she held him back, exclaiming, "Jus' a minute, nigger, the Minister first!"

TWO wealthy bankers on a fishing trip in Maine entered a little backwoods meeting-house they chanced to come across in the course of their wanderings.

They took their places on a bench i rear just as the preacher began his ser For over an hour he continued speak and as it was getting late and he showed no sign of stopping, the two bankers arose and started out.

At this point the parson cut short his discourse. "Under the circumstances," said he grimly, "we will interrupt our remarks and take up the collection now."